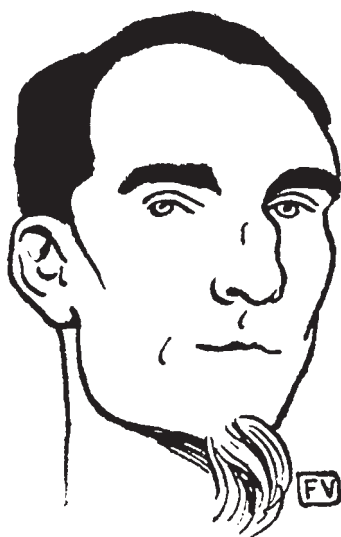


cross-currents in culture ● number 15 • summer 2002 • free

variant



contents

Letters	3
A Lovely Curiosity, Raymond Roussel William Clark	5
Asian Alternative Space Andrew Lam	10
Gareth Williams Ed Baxter	13
Dodgy Analogy John Barker	14
Bloody Hell An American Nurse	17
Tales of the Great Unwashed Ian Brotherhood	18
Muslims and the West after September 11 Pervez Hoodbhoy	20
Desire & a kind of Playfulness Discussion	22
Artists Initiatives in Moscow Gillian McIver	24
Collective Cultural Action Critical Art Ensemble	26
Zine & Comic reviews Mark Pawson	28
The march The story of the historic Scottish hunger march Harry McShane	30

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Letters

...or how the SAC spends your taxes

Dear Sir and Madam,

We act for the Scottish Arts Council.

Our client has sought our legal advice in relation to correspondence which has passed between your company and our client following the decision of the appeals panel of the Scottish Arts Council not to uphold your company's appeal against refusal of an application for a grant from the Scottish Arts Council.

On our client's behalf, we write to inform you that many of the remarks contained in your e-mail of 14 January 2002 which was circulated to a third party are defamatory both of the Scottish Arts Council and of its officer, Sue Pirnie.

On behalf of the Scottish Arts Council, we reserve all legal rights available to it to take legal action against your company arising out of this defamation. We also on behalf of the Council request that you desist from making further such defamatory remarks to third parties.

The Scottish Arts Council has a duty to draw the attention of Sue Pirnie to your e-mail. She may well seek legal advice for herself in relation to the remarks which you have made about her.

We would point out that our client has a public duty to make decisions concerning the allocation of limited financial resources for the promotion of the arts in Scotland. **The Scottish Arts Council, through its committees, seeks to exercise this function at all times in a fair and objective manner and its policy is that all applications be considered with reference to one criterion only: artistic merit.**[emphasis added]

The Council has also put in place an appeals system for applicants whose initial application has been unsuccessful. Again the Scottish Arts Council seeks ensure that these appeals be conducted in a fair and objective manner. Such is our client's concern to maintain this that the procedures which are employed are kept under constant review.

Although your e-mail of 14 January contains defamatory remarks both of the Scottish Arts Council and of Sue Pirnie, it occurs to our client that the overall tone of the e-mail and the reckless and extreme language used in it reflect badly on your own organisation, undermining its professionalism and damaging its reputation. Our clients wonder whether the board of your company is aware of the contents of your e-mail and approves of them. We have also been informed that an e-mail was received by one of our client's officers from you Mr Clark on 29 January which started with the phrase "I won't go into the utter loathing and disgust that I feel in writing to you nor dwell on certain failings, lies etc". Our client cannot see how you can consider it to be in the best interests of your company to use such offensive language. It is totally unacceptable to the Scottish Arts Council for you to write to one of its officers in these terms. We would also point out that this may well be legally actionable. If you persist, our client may have to consider blocking e-mails from you.

You have the assurance of our client that despite any adverse impression created by the tone and language of your e-mails and the defamatory and offensive remarks contained in them, all future applications for grants which your organisation may make to the **Scottish Arts Council will always be considered fairly**

and impartially, with reference to one criterion only: artistic merit. [emphasis added]

In the meantime, please let us have your assurance that no re-occurrence of these recent defamations and offensive e-mails will take place.

This letter is written entirely without prejudice to and under reservation of our client's whole rights and pleas in law and may not be founded upon in any proceedings.

Faithfully

Burness

William 'Reckless & Extreme' Clark responds:

Yeah mine too...Anyone who has applied to the SAC knows that this letter twice makes the false assertion that the SAC make judgements on the *sole* basis of 'artistic merit'. Even the director of the SAC knows that's a lie, and this raises quite serious questions. What utter incompetent gave these false assurances to the SAC's solicitors? Why was a presumably respectable law firm led into putting this into writing and then encouraged to threaten Variant with legal action while we were *trying to use* the SAC's insane appeals process. What does this say for the SAC's regard for their own and their Solicitor's professional reputation?

When this lie is first made it is said to be the basis of SAC's fairness and objectivity in relation to ALL applications. This is an astonishing attempt to deceive everyone. One possibility is that the solicitors just assumed that's what an Arts Council does—but it is exactly because they have dispensed with this criterion that the SAC's role has become intrinsically hypocritical and counter-productive.

When the lie is repeated it is as the basis of the SAC's ability to give credible assurances: so it is clear proof that those running the SAC give false assurances; and we have this courtesy of their solicitors, who will no doubt be writing to them asking why they were misled.

There are several other basic factual inaccuracies in this letter. For example, the SAC did not allow us to actually have an appeal: they had a secret meeting and decided not to allow this. We then informed them that as a result (according to their procedure) we would contact the Scottish Parliamentary Ombudsman. We did, but we cannot really represent our case because the SAC refuse to provide us with minutes of a meeting which they (on orders from above) refused to let us record. The appeals procedure is presently being expensively recomplicated by another team of lawyers...one Scottish MSP described it as "worse than the police's".

Despite their threats we did continue to send emails and they have taken no action. These emails did not defame anyone but actually quoted members of the SAC's Visual Arts Committee and were sent to several hundred people: we desire openness, they do not. That was their whole problem: that we'd made this public.

How could one defame the SAC anyway, the

solicitors don't explain. To use this and terms such as 'reckless' and 'extreme language' of criticism is to reveal a paranoid and secretive organisation unwilling to embrace any form of public accountability. Michael Russell MSP told us:

"I have now written to the SAC just saying that I am concerned by the lack of funding, the way the decision was reached and by the 'arrogant and irresponsible' use of public money on threatening legal action, still less bringing it forward."

To our knowledge he received no reply.

We are still disgusted and expressed this to Gavin Wallace (SAC Literature) because we could not believe that he agreed with the SAC's 'report' on Variant 13 (which contained the work of James Kelman, Peter Kravitz and Harold Pinter and was universally praised) that:

"The consensus of feedback on the quality of Variant has been that it has been [sic]... that it has declined... The content is often very biased or inaccurate... we cannot agree that you meet your stated objectives as a broadly accessible magazine; the language, editorial stance and quality mitigate against this"

This report, little more than condemnation, was written by one person, Sue Pirnie *before* issue 13 had been distributed or anyone could have actually read it. When we asked about this we got this gibberish back:

"...the comments in it; whether on content, communication or any other points, 'summarise feedback from, and received by, SAC'. It would therefore be inaccurate of you to attribute the points to any specific issue or timeframe."

The report is a poisonous piece of writing by someone without the ability to make an informed assessment, to uphold Sue Pirnie's judgement of James Kelman's work is madness.

Wallace didn't actually turn up to the meeting which refused to fund us, but Pirnie did and was practically the only person there. We have letters from Wallace saying we were the 'precedent' for this fund and that we would be funded, but then were told we were nothing to do with it and we weren't funded because of 'the competition', which turned out to be non-existent. The minutes of the meeting inform us that they found the magazine 'unintelligible', yet they also deliberately ignored the outside opinion they sought because it was impartially in favour of us.

For the SAC we will be 'self-sufficient' if we do not receive their funding, but when they withdrew it they informed other bodies that we were 'financially unviable': that was two issues ago. People who the SAC consulted have told us that their decisions are 'political,' but SAC lack the honesty to admit this.

As far as magazines go the SAC is failing wildly. Magazines have even had to hand back grants because they cannot conform to the ludicrous criteria imposed upon the money. They also fund magazines which don't exist.

Issue 13 (which attracted comment from the Cabinet Office) exposed the think tank *Demos* as the government's hired stooges in concocting arts policy. They conceded that we had 'trashed' their work. It's hard to see all this as anything else than an attempt to bully and punish us for this.

Letters (Continued)**Leigh ‘defamatory’ French replies**

While the Scottish Arts Council may refute it and threaten those who publicly speak out with legal action, it’s common knowledge amongst arts organisations (born of experience) that SAC Arts Officers have disproportionate and undue influence on its Committees.

At the level of project funding, Officers control much more than just communication between artists who apply and a committee which allegedly makes funding decisions. Changes to the decision making structure, with the removal of all but a few emblematic artists, have concentrated this imbalance—what was a chronic situation has been made all the worse. It’s totally unacceptable that these tiny, little committees at a remove from the majority of artists and the diversity of contemporary practice are let to hold sway. Funding schemes supposedly established to provide something altogether different, to be run by different people to address other concerns, have ended up perpetuating entrenched departmental deficiencies, internal bias and conceit.

The concentration of a few individuals in positions of regional and national influence across Scotland, coupled with the centralisation of priorities for the arts, also means that decisions are ultimately carried through which can negatively influence other departments, funding bodies, and funding decisions.

Another common view is that SAC funding decisions and their relations to other organisations are

inappropriately dominated by issues of ‘personality’. In Scotland the Arts Council is failing to support or encourage genuine critical debate. Where there is a lack of diversity and mass of representation, stereotypes circulate as surrogates for genuine, informed exchanges. There’s an issue of cultural diversity and of language here, of the assumptions of a managerial class laden with negative imagery of ‘Others’.

(Variant has systematically had projected onto it a derogatory, animalistic stereotype—we are said to be reckless, deficient, deviant, unprofessional, extreme, out of control, unintelligible...)

It’s baneful that Arts Officers can go unchallenged in simply defining Culture in terms of their own image, their own tastes, and those who do not match this description are lesser. Clearly, on a basic level, broader and informed SAC representation is essential to counter this deficiency which permits abuses of power to occur, whether knowingly or not.

Fundamental to these ‘obstacles’ has been a structural shift from ethereal “qualitative” assessments, to a supposedly disinterested and technocratic evaluation of how well applications conform to Cultural Strategy priorities—themselves ill defined and open to individual interpretation, enforcement and abuse. In essence, bureaucrats and managers have supplanted what were once artistic positions within the arts. This is an insidious shift to a ‘management’ of the arts along unabashed political tram lines.

The new Director of the SAC was previously the Head of Finance—for all purposes, an

accountant. The most the papers could say of his re-appointment (after the SAC’s most expensive recruitment drive ever) was he’s a ‘keen amateur photographer.’ Others noticed that the forced removal and subsequent replacement of the previous Director, Tessa Jackson, conveniently cleared the way for new Labour appointed Chairman, James Boyle to go unchallenged as SAC’s Cultural pontiff.

The debates surrounding Tessa Jackson’s sacking are shrouded in mystery as lawyers were brought in to silence any meaningful public revelations. As such the situation remains unresolved. So how accountable or representative can the SAC be when the arguments and power struggles that actually matter within decision making are not known—when they are actually hidden from public scrutiny?

A lovely Curiosity

Raymond Roussel (1877–1933)

William Clark



"A formidable poetic apparatus"

Marcel Proust

"Raymond Roussel belongs to the most important French literature of the beginning of the century"

Alain Robbe-Grillet

"Genius in its pure state"

Jean Cocteau

"Creator of authentic myths"

Michel Leiris

"A great poet"

Marcel Duchamp

"The President of the Republic of Dreams"

Louis Aragon

"The greatest mesmerist of modern times"

André Breton

"The plays are among the strangest and most enchanting in modern literature"

John Ashbery

"My fame will outshine that of Victor Hugo or Napoleon"

Raymond Roussel

Victor who? Go into any book shop and they'll probably not have anything on or by Raymond Roussel. In 1957 the young Michel Foucault noticed some faded yellow books in José Corti's famous Parisian book store and tentatively asked the grand old man "who was Raymond Roussel?" Wearied by Foucault's ignorance, Corti looked at him with a "generous sort of pity" and feeling a sense of loss sighed: "But after all, Roussel..." What Corti told him and what he found in the pages he raced through mesmerised Foucault into paying for an expensive copy of 'La Vue' and (in two months) he wrote the darkly romantic 'Death and the Labyrinth' on Roussel's world. ¹

When it was translated into English an anonymous reviewer in The Times Literary Supplement remarked that the book 'seems addressed to an audience of cognoscenti, which must be exceedingly small in France and can hardly number more than two or three here.' However, Foucault's book was noticed by the new novelists in France,

and Alain Robbe-Grillet saw the 'fascinating essay' as one of the signs of a growing interest in Roussel, albeit not widely spread beyond certain circles. Roussel's life and work are so unusual that for a long time some people believed him to be a fictional character. ²

A new biography 'Raymond Roussel' by Francois Caradec and translated by Ian Monk has recently been published by Atlas Press—who in a series of Anthologies have enthusiastically preserved Roussel. This comes fairly soon after Mark Ford's 'Raymond Roussel and the Republic of Dreams', (Cornell University Press) embalmed him a bit earlier, and there is some difference of opinion and emphasis in the two works.

His objective of complete artificiality caused Roussel to state he drew none of his creations from real life. Caradec just wonders 'who he was trying to kid' and similarly does not take Roussel's final work, *Comment j'ai écrit certains de mes livres*, on face value—few serious commentators do. Colin Raff's review of Ford's book states Roussel "derived none of his striking creations from experience, wrote unimpeded by introspection or sentiment, unhampered by moral reflection or facile realism." For Raff there is nothing 'transcendental' in Roussel: "The author's creative procedures are the final revelation." ³

The generalisation inherent in that is challenged by Caradec who I think is closer to events. One might as well say that the artists creative intentions were the 'final revelation'. The writing can only be regarded as an experiment in this direction.

"I call them famous because they are appreciated by me and some of my friends" Baudelaire

Roussel is on the sharp point of a whole anti-tradition in French writing which influenced modern art and modernism at a very fundamental level. Socially he was not part of the leftist avant-garde tradition which grew out of the suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871, when the French state turned on its internal opposition in a besieged city. Fabulously wealthy, Roussel is more associated with the Aristocratic and the 'Dandy'.

For Baudelaire in "The Painter of Modern Life" (1859) the dandy was an integral aspect to the character of the modern artist:

"Contrary to what a lot of thoughtless people seem to believe, dandyism is not even an excessive delight in clothes and material elegance. For the perfect dandy, these things are not more than the symbol of the aristocratic superiority of his mind....It is, above all the burning desire to create a personal form of originality, within the external limits of social conventions... dandyism in certain respects comes close to spirituality and to stoicism, but a dandy can never be a vulgar man... Dandyism appears especially in those periods of transition when democracy has not yet become all-powerful, and when aristocracy is only partially weakened and discredited... Dandyism is the last flicker of heroism in decadent ages... Dandyism is a setting sun; like the declining star, it is magnificent, without heat and full of melancholy."

Which is a perfect description of Roussel: the language is also mirrored by Foucault:

"Things, words, vision and death, the sun and language make a unique form...Roussel in some

way has defined its geometry."

Dandyism is also seen as a conscious and elaborate rejection of bourgeois life, accentuating difference in a society that was moving toward uniformization. ⁴ In some respects the Dandy had to conjure up a world of artistic credibility, integrity and high standards from which to react and upon which to perform. Knowing he would be forgotten Roussel planned his own mythology, part of which was to posthumously reveal a great secret behind his books.

Like the declining star

This was Roussel's unique compositional technique which generated a structure for the plots and images of his writing, in much the same way that meter and rhyme control the arrangement of words in a sonnet. This synesthesia between music and poetry and prose developed gradually.

"The quotidian is notable by its absence from his work: this is not a literature with much appeal for anyone in search of a social conscience. But if one is magnetised by works of the imagination derived almost solely from linguistics, Roussel represents some kind of summation. How I Wrote Certain of My Books, the posthumously published testament in which Roussel delineates many—but by no means all—of his writing techniques, is, as they say, essential reading. As a vade mecum it doesn't necessarily make the books easier to penetrate, but it does provide some clue as to what lies beneath them (though no matter how knowledgeable these clues make us, as readers, feel, no amount of shouting "Open Sesame!" at the threshold of the books entices them to reveal all their secrets). The most obvious examples...can be found early in his career, before he learnt to cover his tracks...One finds this mixture of the "simple as ABC with the quintessential" (to quote Michel Leris' memorable definition) as either childish or brilliantly inventive. A Rousselian finds both attitudes acceptable." ⁵

The process is one of unforeseen creation due to phonic combinations and is based more on puns than rhymes:

"I chose two similar words. For example billiards and pilliards (looter). Then I added to it words similar but taken in two different directions, and I obtained two almost identical sentences thus. The two found sentences, it was a question of writing a tale which can start with the first and finish by the second. Amplifying the process then, I sought new words reporting itself to the word billiards, always to take them in a different direction than that which was presented first of all, and that provided me each time a creation moreover. The process evolved/moved and I was led to take an unspecified sentence, of which I drew from the images by dislocating it, a little as if it had been a question of extracting some from the drawings of rebus." ⁶

In lavishly published volumes Roussel's technique develops strongly from *La Vue* (1903), *Impressions d'Afrique* (1909) and then *Locus Solus* (1914), here summed up by John Ashbery: ⁷

"A prominent scientist and inventor, Martial Canterel, has invited a group of colleagues to visit the park of his country estate, Locus Solus ("Solitary Place"). As the group tours the estate, Canterel shows them inventions of ever-increasing complexity and strangeness. Again, exposition is invariably followed by explanation, the cold hysteria of the former giving way to the innumerable ramifications of the latter. After an aerial pile driver which is constructing a mosaic of teeth and a huge glass diamond filled with water in which float a dancing girl, a hairless cat, and the preserved head of



Danton, we come to the central and longest passage: a description of eight curious tableaux vivants taking place inside an enormous glass cage. We learn that the actors are actually dead people whom Canterel has revived with “resurrectine,” a fluid of his invention which if injected into a fresh corpse causes it continually to act out the most important incident of its life.”

Caradec’s biography (revised in 97 from that published in 72 because of the new finds of Roussel’s papers) establishes that in real life, Roussel on several occasions visited the astronomer and scientist Camille Flammarion and witnessed his peculiar experiments and observations of the outer planets, then still in the process of discovery. It would seem that Roussel’s admiration for the Jules Verne-like scientist Flammarion, was combined in the character, ‘Martial Canterel’ with Roussel’s own aspirations to be a scientist and explorer. Flammarion even proposed him (like a scene from a Jules Verne novel) to the French Astronomical Society. Bringing out the person more than the process, Caradec tempts us to read Roussel as a blending of Jules Verne’s, Flammarion’s and Pierre Loti’s influence.⁸

Ford too, had access to many of Roussel’s manuscripts, including his early unfinished epic poems:

“In these he found literally thousands of pages of obsessive description and endless digressions from the main plots. Ford calls this prolixity “compulsive,” and that’s not overstating it: Act II of the 7000-line *La Seine* contains nearly 400 named characters, all spewing banal small talk. Ford’s book demonstrates that Roussel developed his techniques as an attempt to somehow control his manic verbosity.”⁹

There’s none of that in Caradec’s book, which presents a much more studious and controlled Roussel. Opinions also seem to differ in Ford’s assertion that:

“...none of this could persuade the bourgeois multitude (whose tastes he shared, and whose adulation he coveted) of Roussel’s gloire. Only the contemporary avant-garde—the surrealists, whose work he professed not to understand—were enthusiastic...”¹⁰

Nothing interesting ever persuades the Bourgeois multitude, but he confuses us here with that ‘only’ and the suggestion that Roussel had bourgeois taste. Caradec (and Andrew Thompson in the *Atlas Anthology*) establish that Roussel was appreciated by a range of critics and several other influential writers and reviewers of his day: some of the earliest were Edmond Rostand (author of *Cyrano de Bergerac*), Andre Gide and his fellow Dandy, Robert de Montesquiou who said of *Impressions d’Afrique* in 1921:

“The second half of the work explains everything, not merely with satisfying logic, better than that, with a mathematical precision. The author says somewhere of one of his characters, “the sum of his orations presented a great unity.” This judgement could be applied to his narratives. The maddest incoherencies of the preceding chapters are explained with a geometric exactitude and with such an equilibrium of corroborating evidence that it almost becomes monotonous. It seems they must represent the hoc erat in votis of this particular genre. It ends up giving these combinations, which are above all else eccentric and bizarre, a bourgeois appearance.”¹¹

Roussel wrote more to vainly immortalise himself than to please the ‘Bourgeois multitude’: wealth freed him from that nightmare. Caradec constantly questions the pure abstraction others claim for Roussel. With *Locus Solus* Roussel’s ‘evolved procedure’ (as Robert de Montesquiou termed it) develops the word demoiselle (meaning



‘young girl’) to pun into ‘pile driver’ and ‘dragon-fly’ and then grow into the ridiculous flying machine mentioned earlier. But demoiselle was also the name of an early balloon-assisted aeroplane owned by the aviator Santos-Dumont. These were the days when humans learned to fly and as obsessed with science as Roussel was, he couldn’t help noticing such an event. John Ashberry suggests that just as the mechanical task of finding a rhyme sometimes inspires a poet to write a great line, Roussel’s “rimes de faits” (rhymes for events) helped him to utilise his unconscious mind.

As Roussel developed as a writer his procedure grew to an incredibly complex method:

“We find here, transposed onto the level of poetry, the technique of the stories with multiple interlocking episodes (tiroirs) so frequent in Roussel’s work, but here the episodes appear in the sentences themselves, and not in the story, as though Roussel had decided to use these parentheses to speed the disintegration of language, in a way comparable to that in which Mallarmé used blanks to produce those ‘prismatic subdivisions of the idea’”¹²

Nouvelles Impressions d’Afrique

His master work is perhaps *Nouvelles Impressions d’Afrique*¹³ which comprises of four long Cantos, each containing a single sentence which starts out as a simple poetic statement or description. Roussel uses a series of parentheses which run to a maximum of five brackets-within-brackets, occasionally a footnote refers to a further poem containing its own ‘onion-like’ sets of brackets. Everything is written in rhyming ‘Alexandrines’ (French heroic verse of six feet), which is extraordinary given the self-imposed constraints of Roussel’s procedure.

The presence of parentheses within parentheses produces multiple trains of thought. Not all

the parenthetical rings sit neatly within one another. Canto II, for example, dips in and out of the fourth parenthesis at irregular intervals, but the poem gradually focuses into a impressive simplicity, like music. Roussel himself was a musician and the structuring of these images and ideas resemble musical form more than conventional poetic form.

If you can’t face actually reading it, Juan-Esteban Fassio, of the College de Pataphysique, has invented a machine to do it: a kind of card index on a revolving drum with a handle. As one critic notes Roussel managed to enable himself to read his own books as if he hadn’t written them. In 1950 Michel Butor stated that:

“It is not the juxtaposition of words which explains the wealth of repetitions and of reproductive apparatus encountered in these texts. On the contrary, it is this

Robert de Montesquiou

obsession which makes us realise what an irresistible compulsion, and authentic and deep-seated instinct, led Roussel to choose these singular methods, and not any others, for writing these works.”¹⁴

One of the most remarkable peculiarities of *Locus Solus* and *Impressions d’Afrique* is that nearly all the scenes are described twice. First, we witness them as if they were a ceremony or a theatrical event; and then they are explained to us, by their history being recounted. This is particularly the case in *Impressions*; the author went to the trouble, after publication, of inserting a slip of green paper on which he suggested that “those readers not initiated in the art of Raymond Roussel are advised to begin this book at p. 212 and go on to p. 455, and then turn back to p. 1 and read to p. 211.”¹⁵

Speak, my darling

Although complex, Roussel’s methodology is one for writing; not for reading, which is performed in the normal way:

“Lucius Egroizard, who was driven insane by the sight of drunken brigands trampling his infant daughter to death: Not only does Egroizard compulsively sculpt lightweight gold figurines that repeat the brigands’ lethal jig in mid-air, but the very hairs on his nearly bald head periodically detach themselves to mimic the dance. Egroizard experiments with an array of strange objects, until he constructs a Goldbergian contraption that produces a sound identical to his daughter’s voice “It’s you, my Gillette. They haven’t killed you. You’re here next to me Speak, my darling.” And between these broken phrases, the fragment of the word, which he constantly reproduced, returned again and again, like a response. Speaking in hushed tones, Canterel led us quietly away, so as to allow this salutary crisis to run its course in peace.”¹⁶

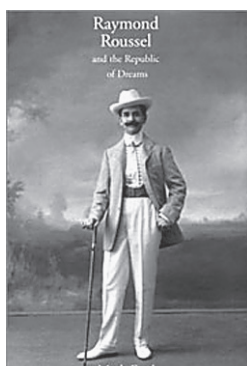
Roussel loved children’s shows and the popular theatre, disdaining the ‘theatre of ideas.’ One American critic *dismisses* Roussel as composing simply “fractured...fairy tales energised with a Jules Verne-inspired reinterpretation of the physical universe”—yeah that old thing. The fact that a book may resemble children’s stories does not necessarily imply it was childishly written: as *Gulliver’s Travels*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Alice in Wonderland* and most of Borges would suggest. Roussel was greatly interested in children’s games and puzzles (as was Lewis Carroll).¹⁷

Michel Leris says, “Roussel here discovered one of the most ancient and widely used patterns of the human mind: the formation of myths starting from words. That is (as though he had decided to illustrate Max Müller’s theory that myths were born out of a sort of ‘disease of language’), transposition of what was at first a simple fact of language into a dramatic action.” Elsewhere he suggest that these childish devices led Roussel back to a common source of mythology or collective unconscious.”

But it was with Roussel’s plays that the ideas of *Impressions of Africa* and *Locus Solus* came to life and caused chaos in French theatre. Yes—the bourgeois multitude was outraged.

‘There is no one who has not caressed some ambitious dream.’ Raymond Roussel

How did Roussel become so obscure? I hear no one ask. Literary and artistic success are often based on mass marketing masquerading as artistic achievement; media attention dictates ‘literary establishment.’ But Roussel paid for loads of it. Literary history has a political economy which we are taught to believe (and not participate) in... or could it just be that reading the work is like wan-



dering on a complex system of invisible trampolines?

The Second World War erased just about everything in Paris and the post-war literary climate was dominated by Sartre and existentialism. But the late 50s saw the emergence of the Nouveau Roman (Alain Robbe-Grillet, et al.) and the Oulipo (Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle—Workshop of Potential Literature founded in Paris in 1960 and including writers such as Georges Perec and Italo Calvino) a group of ‘Rousselian’ enthusiasts who extended his “generative device,” where the reader is obscurely aware of some other ordering principle beneath the surface, as similar elements keep recurring in unpredictable patterns. Both Caradec and Ian Monk are members of the Oulipo. As the Atlas website puts it:

“Our aim as publishers has been to delineate a coherent “anti-tradition” whose roots reach back to Romanticism, an oppositional literary and artistic manifestation which, in its various guises, has maintained an obstinate presence within an inimical host: the literary establishment...We see no necessity to acknowledge any idea of “progress” in this tradition, although naturally enough, it manifests itself in new forms at different times and in different places... Likewise, we do not subscribe to the notion of the end of modernism, of the concept of an avant-garde, of “experimental” writing, call it what you will. The writing we are committed to publishing is modern, despite its being from the last hundred and fifty years...”

Roussel entrusted his literary fate to a small gang of Parisian Surrealists—as can be seen from Caradec’s examination of his will—which he mis-regarded as his dedicated coterie. It is because of a few genuine admirers such as Michel Leris that his work has survived. It is a pity Apollinaire—who coined the term ‘surréalisme’ for his own play *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, to designate an analogical way of representing reality *beyond realism*—did not write about him. But along with Marcel Duchamp he delightedly attended Roussel’s plays and both were heavily influenced.

Put on at Roussel’s own vast expense, they enjoyed some vogue largely because of the vociferous reactions by the audience. Here, according to Foucault the Surrealists tried to ‘orchestrate the character of Roussel’ with contrived demonstrations. Andre Breton, Aragon, Picabia, Robert Desnos and Micheal Leris (all on complementary tickets and probably out of their heads) went to the premieres and provoked the stunned audience. This ended with the police being called to assist with something like a rugby scrum between the actors the audience and (as the ball) the Surrealists. The events are genuinely hysterical; it is a strange thought that we could have had a sound and film recording of the events: nothing remains...(?)

Antonin Artaud observed that the issue is to “rediscover the secret of an objective poetry based on the humour that theatre renounced, that it abandoned to Vaudeville, before cinema got hold of it.” Someone said that Roussel put an audience through a worse theatre of cruelty than Artaud dreamed of.¹⁸ It was crippling obvious the actors were in it for the money, but this made the theatre come to life and life all the more theatrical. After a sober description of the cast Caradec describes the first night of *Impressions d’Afrique* with “All hell broke loose”. Descriptions of it would have to range from the Carry On films crossed with Terry Gilliam’s animations...and that was just the stalls...but we should strip away these influences and imagine it watched by an audience barely acquainted with Chaplin...it was like nothing else.

A few critics worried that the plays were the

new *Ubu Roi* or *Calagari* (sets were variously described as Dada, Cubist and Expressionist which slightly illustrates how close these ‘styles’ are and how Roussel could encompass them). When revues of *Impressions d’Afrique* appeared in the popular press Roussel felt that he had passed ‘quite unnoticed’. This is not unsurprising because as a young man he dreamed of supreme glory:

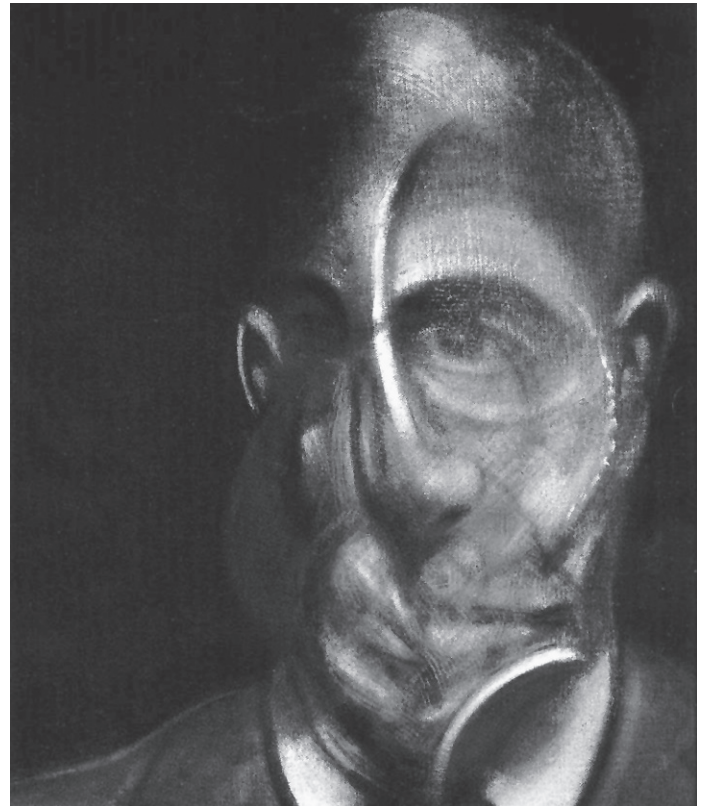
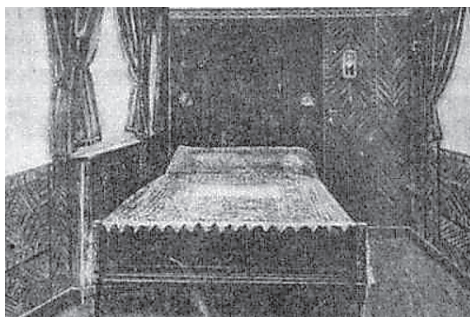
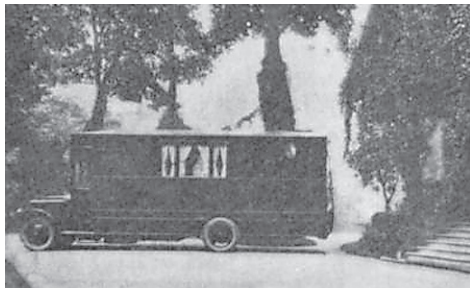
“...What I wrote was surrounded by radiance, I closed the curtains, for I was afraid that the slightest gap might allow the luminous beams that were radiating from my pen to escape outside, I wanted to tear the screen away suddenly and illuminate the world. If I left these papers lying about, they would have sent rays of light as far as China and a bewildered crowd would have burst into the house...”¹⁹

Roussel’s extravagances are no worse than Hollywood producer’s love letters to themselves in multi-million dollar crap. The Surrealists (yet to enter their political phase) did not fail to notice that he was a walking advertisement for the redistribution of wealth, and sponged off him, as did practically everyone in the art world he came into contact with. He had to pay the actors extra money to go on stage giving them pearls and rare gifts and simply more cash.

‘A conspiracy of knavery’

The focus on the method and the structure has engendered a move away from viewing Roussel in relation to his times. His very involvement with the disreputable world of theatre displaced his own position in the upper class and he seems (almost by chance) to express its social values parodically. One of the characters in *Impressions d’Afrique* devises a parody of the stock exchange and we can choose to see Roussel as the drop-out Dandy son of a stockbroker, mocking the stock market as the absurd basis of the stability of our society. Perhaps, but people simply felt that he was having them on, that his work was an elaborate practical joke, that they were somehow being swindled:

“Apollinaire knew he was collaborating in an elaborate and sly mystification called modern art. Manet’s public provocations and Toulouse-Lautrec’s cabaret posters had introduced the principle that the studio joke can carry all before it. What begins as parody and protest ends up as the dominant style [...] it is possible to claim that the art of the early twentieth century in France is based on an elaborate hoax—a dare, a conspiracy of knavery on the part of many artists—and to make the claim without dismissing that art as worthless. After Jarry and Apollinaire and Duchamp, we have had to deal with several generations of gifted impostors. They were also dedicated to art.”²⁰



Francis Bacon’s portrait of Micheal Leris

Somehow the ambition of a rich man is disingenuous compared to that of the bourgeoisie theatre owners, newspaper critics or actors: because he can purchase their support. Roussel’s theatrical ambitions clearly delineated that any aspect of the tightly controlled artistic society could be bought: and that notions of artistic integrity were illusory. That probably made people uneasy too. From this distance Roussel comes out of it all looking like a hybrid of an artist and patron and a paragon of charm, wit and elan, unconsciously exposing an art world blind to its venal aspects and confined within the boundaries of simplistic rules.

“The actors were selected with a view to attracting the public. Roussel was open handed and paid them what they wanted. When observing how hard it would be to make one of the lines work, which, despite its dullness, Roussel was particularly keen on keeping, Pierre Frondaie exclaimed in desperation ; “To make that work we’d need Sarah Bernhardt!” Roussel replied: “Do you think she would accept? How much would she want?”²¹

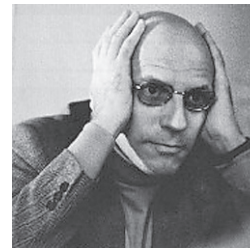
Yet he seems to have been devastated by the reviews. Pierre Frondaie (who had been hired to adapt *Locus Solus*) had slipped in cutting jibes at the reviewers sitting there on the first night. Still devastated ten years later Roussel wrote that afterwards there followed a ‘river of fountain pens’ from the critics. Nevertheless, he had an almost clockwork confidence, an indefatigable ability to persevere, oblivious to the insanity of his plays:

“Thinking that the public’s incomprehension perhaps derived from the fact that I had until then presented only adaptations of novels, I decided to write something specifically for the stage.”

Even after the stockmarket collapse the third play was put on with slightly more modest resources, here we see Roussel ‘composing his audience’ as if it were part of the casting. Although it has something of the Ernie Wise about it, one expects him to sound like one of Michael Palin’s characters: surely a film will one day be made of Roussel’s life. One has been made of the Petomane—with Leonard Rossiter—and surely Roussel had just as much to say, albeit by a different procedure.

Writers have left the music of the plays largely untouched and it is still in the early stages of critical comprehension. Yet no one can deny that

Left: Roussel’s motorised caravan



Michel Foucault

Roussel was proficient musically, having studied at the Paris Conservatoire. When things got completely out of hand with the plays he, on occasion, would dive down to the piano and rattle off a crowd pleaser. At one performance they performed the whole thing to one guy in the audience and then gave him his money back.

“Was it not from India that Raymond Roussel sent an electric heater to a friend who has asked for something rare as a souvenir?” Roger Vitrac (1928)

Roussel’s extravagant squandering of his fabulous wealth (mostly on his writing) and his curious mental state are the subject of numerous anecdotes of self-indulgence and pretence. Practically no one bought the books. The first edition of *Locus Solus* was not sold out until 22 years later. To make them look like best-sellers he produced several impressions at a time, printing ‘tenth impression’ on the covers of brand-new publications. Roussel was the child of an overbearing mother: according to Ford after the death of his brother “Madame Roussel insisted that her surviving son should undergo a medical examination every day.” On their last foreign holiday they went to Ceylon and Madame Roussel brought along a coffin, so as not to inconvenience the other travellers in case she passed away. Supposedly Roussel, through a detective agency, commissioned a commercial artist named Henri Zo to provide 59 illustrations for one of his last works. Roussel supplied Zo with simple verbal descriptions for each image and, without ever meeting the artist, accepted the results that emerged. Roussel also travelled around Europe in a giant plushly furnished motorised caravan: forty years ahead of Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters. He displayed this in front of the Pope and Mussolini who were suitably impressed and it appeared in the equivalent of *Hello* magazine. But, and its a huge psychological but:

“Daily contact with reality which to him seemed strewn with pitfalls obliged Roussel to take a number of precautions. During a certain period of his life when he suffered anguish whenever he happened to be in a tunnel, and was anxious to know at all times where he was, he avoided travelling at night; the idea that the act of eating is harmful to one’s “serenity” also led him, during one period, to fast for days on end, after which he would break his fast by going to Rumpelmeyer’s and devouring a vast quantity of cakes (corresponding to his taste for childish foods: marshmallows, milk, bread pudding, racahout); certain places to which he was attached by particularly happy childhood memories were taboo for him: Aix-les-Bains, Luchon, Saint-Moritz...; also, afraid of being injured or causing injury in conversations, he used to say that in order to avoid all dangerous talk with people, he preceded by asking them questions.”²²

‘Language is a form of human reason, which has its internal logic of which man knows nothing.’ Claude Levi-Strauss

Roussel’s final *How I Wrote certain of My Books* (and the second part of *Impressions d’Afrique* and the explanatory narratives of *Locus Solus*) are central to Foucault because they are Roussel’s attempt to mythologise his life and work: Foucault is also fascinated by Roussel’s suicide, which he glamorises. (what else to do?)

“In a way Roussel’s attitude is the reverse of Kafka’s, but as difficult to interpret. Kafka had entrusted his manuscripts to Max Brod to be destroyed after his death—to Max Brod, who had said he would never destroy them. Around his death Roussel organised a simple explanatory essay which is made suspect by the text, his other books, and even the circumstances of his death.”

Roussel, in a tragic state of barbiturate dependency, with all his money gone, surrounded by empty pill bottles was found on a mattress at the threshold of his pretend mistress’ adjoining bedroom. This for Foucault becomes a metaphor, a rebus-like suicide note:

“Whatever is understandable in his language speaks to us from a threshold where access is inseparable from what constitutes its barrier...”

Roussel wanted to achieve an aesthetic control of imaginative standards and to create the tools for an operation dictated by their shape, to achieve the transformation of his being through writing. As Foucault puts it:

“The identity of words—the simple, fundamental fact of language, that there are fewer terms of designation than there are things to designate—is itself a two-sided experience: it reveals words as the unexpected meeting place of the most distant figures of reality. (It is distance abolished; at the point of contact, differences are brought together in a unique form: dual, ambiguous, Minotaur-like.)”

Foucault wrote his book (which gives an enigmatic insight into his later works) while working on the history of madness. But Roussel’s ‘madness’ was not the initial concern: he was intrigued by an escape from the existentialist school and phenomenology coming from the left and the ‘End of History’ ideology (then all pervasive in France thanks to the CIA). Foucault was attracted by Roussel’s literary perverseness.

For Michel Butor (writing in 1950) all of Roussel’s writing, like Proust’s, is a search for lost time, but this recovery of childhood is in no sense a retrogressive movement; rather it is “a return into the future, for the event rediscovered changes its level and meaning.” Cocteau (who met Roussel in what would now be termed a rehab clinic) called him ‘the Proust of dreams,’ in this sense Proust—thought of as the ‘final elaboration of 20th century fiction’ in taking the novel to extremes—is rivalled, yet Foucault offers this disclaimer:

“His was an extremely interesting experiment; it wasn’t only a linguistic experiment, but an experiment with the nature of language, and it’s more than the experimentation of someone obsessed. He truly created, or, in any case, broke through, embodies, and created a form of beauty, a lovely curiosity, which is in fact a literary work. But I wouldn’t say that Roussel is comparable to Proust.”²³

notes

1. Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth* Athlone Press 1987 p172.

2. C. O'Farrell *Foucault: Historian or Philosopher?* Macmillan London 1989.

3. <http://www.nypress.com/14/19/books/books.cfm>

4. *Préciosite and Dandyism: Ages of Beauty* by Iole Apicella. Moliere wrote the play *Les Précieuses* based on (and ridiculing) an earlier French form of dandyism termed 'Préciosite'.

5. Trevor Winkfield, *Reading Raymond Roussel*.

6. Roussel *Comment j'ai écrit certains de mes livres*.

7. Introduction to Foucault's 'Death and the Labyrinth.'

8. Pierre Loti (pyer lôte') is the pseudonym of Julien Viaud, 1850-1923, French novelist and navy officer. He achieved popularity with his impressionistic romances of adventure in exotic lands. Roussel's nickname was *Ramuntcho* possibly from the 1897 Loti story of French Basque peasant life. Both on p183 and p271 Caradec repeats minor details of Loti's wife. On Flammariion Caradec enigmatically states that: "There are also, perhaps, traces of the astronomer's scientific mysticism and parapsychic research still to be discovered in Roussel's writings, despite his materialistic scepticism." (p225).

9. Quoted from Raff.

10. *ibid*

11. Robert de Montesquiou (*Raymond Roussel Life, Death and work*, Atlas). Caradec maintains that Willy worked out his procedure in 1925. Reviewers also say that Ford's book gave the impression that Roussel viewed his *Nouvelles Impressions d'Afrique* not as an innovation in structure, but as the ingenious equivalent of a "crossword puzzle," Caradec has an indignant sideswipe at this saying that crossword puzzles weren't known in France at the time.

12. *Atlas Anthology*, Ashbury quoting Leris.

13. Another connection does exist between the two titles, namely: *impression a fric*, that is to say "a publication at the author's own expense" and so: "a new publication at the author's own expense."

14. *Atlas Anthology*.

15. *Locus Solus* is available in French at <http://wwwus-ers.imaginet.fr/~werkh/roussel/>

There are some similarities with Flann O'Brien's novels, Michel Leiris, writing in 1954 states that there is no Rousselian work in which the end and the beginning do not join each other. At times we seem transported to the world of De Selby. After pages setting out Roussel's fervent admiration and worship of Pierre Loti, Caradec states:

"But the strangest document is certainly the portrait of Loti in the uniform of the Academie francaise which was found among Roussel's papers: on the photo, somebody has inked in two large ears, before crossing out the face...the intention could be either mocking or malevolent, but we do not know who disfigured the photo, or why Raymond Roussel kept it." p183.

16. Ford's translation.

17. Doug Nufer <http://www.litline.org/ABR/Issues/Volume22/Issue6/abr226.html>

18. Andre Breton *Anthology of Black Humour*. Roussel's writing doesn't quite concur with Breton's ideas of 'pure psychic automatism', which permitted no revision. Neither does it directly concur with his later obsession with the occult. Breton seems surprised by Roussel's eventual revelation of what lay beneath his work, writing in 1933: "...during his lifetime few people had clearly sensed that he owed his prodigious gift of invention to a technique he had himself discovered, that he was making use, as it were, of a crib for the imagination, like a crib for memory."

On the inspiration of occult writing techniques on the early symbolists, such as texts with keys and hidden meanings, ciphers and encryption see <http://www.fiu.edu/~mizrachs/poseur3.html>

19. Roussel *Comment j'ai écrit certains de mes livres*.

20. *Apollinaire on Art* ed. Leroy C. Breunig, from the forward by Roger Shattuck. There was a recent presentation in the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum of Roussel's writing and artwork influenced by him. Apollinaire, Duchamp and Picabia were impressed by the stage adaptation of *Impressions d'Afrique* which was partly responsible for Duchamp's ready-mades and directly inspired his enigmatic masterpiece *The Large Glass* (begun around about 1913). Picabia later incorporated his impressions of Roussel's plays into a collection of poems entitled *Fille née sans Mère*, copiously illustrated with schematic drawings of machines. Roussel's meticulous style with its abundance of puns and double meanings also influenced Salvador Dali's well-known landscape-cum-self-portrait named after *Impressions d'Afrique*. One can find slight similarities to Roussel in some of the more obscure written works (exploring the nature of language) by Duchamp, particularly 'The' (1915) (p639 *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, Arturo Swartz).

21. Caradec.

22. Michel Leris 1954, Caradec follows that quote a little bit too closely.

23. Michel Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth*, from the interview by Charles Ruas.



Scenes from *Impressions d'Afrique*

Asian alternative space – World alternative city

Andrew Lam

Introduction

The essay aims at mapping out the field for artist run spaces and their relevance to the construction of Asia and Asian identities.

Asia's New Order

Alternative or independent art spaces are generally considered as the third tier within the institutional hierarchy, yet tend to question the conventional order and assume a more provocative position. 'Festival of Vision: Berlin—Hong Kong (2000)', is one event that exemplifies how an alternative organisation such as Zuni Icosahedrons (Hong Kong) could engage in a dialogue of cross-cultural politics. During 2001, 'alternative art spaces' became a key topic for the international symposia organized by *Bamboo Curtain Studio* (Taipei), *1aspace*, *Para/Site Art Space* (Hong Kong), and the touring performances in Asia curated by *Museum of Site* (Hong Kong).

Official patronage systems or local governments subsidies of all the above activities (with the so-called arms-length policy) has further complicated the current power relationship between artists, governments, and non-governmental organizations.¹

Symbiosis

At the Gwangju Biennale 2002, the parasitical relationships between the alternative spaces and the museum system are satirical. Such simulacra of cultural politics reflect the complexity and irony in post-modernism, in particular the concerns with the reality, fabrication, and creativity in the process of historical archiving.

In theory and practice, an art system is constituted by a conglomerate of alternative spaces, studios, libraries, art villages, art colleges, museums and galleries, etc.. Pathological diagnosis of civic and urban issues, as driven by alternative spaces in the case of Old Ladies House (Macau), Fringe Club, Zuni, MOST, 1aspace (Hong Kong), Whashang Art District (Taipei), helps sharpen our vision and justifies necessary courses of action. We can picture this as 'stitching a button on a cloth, but not making a new skirt'. It is impossible for one part either to completely displace or replace the others in the art system.

They are here for now

With a visionary perspective, alternative spaces bring information, enjoyment and delights to the city. They justify the production of visual art projects from around the world. There is now an urgency for alternative spaces to reflect on their existences and political agencies relative of their local community. For example, 'Be Part of Our Vision', says Plastique Kinetic Worms (Singapore). When such positive attitude becomes alive, alternative spaces are here for *now*. Being part of a community fabric, Alternative spaces gear to par-

ticular problems. Alternative spaces like Bamboo Curtain Studio (Taipei), MOST (Hong Kong) deliberately work with different communities. Whashang Art District (Taipei) and Cattle Depot Art Village (Hong Kong) are the fruitful outcomes of long-term political negotiations. Loop, Insa Art Space (Seoul), Zuni Cattle College, 1aspace, Para/Site Artspace (Hong Kong), Sly Art or Shin Leh Yuan, Front, ITPark (Taipei), Dog Pig Art Cafe (Kaoshung), DDM Warehouse (Shanghai), LOFT (Beijing) and Surrounded by Water (Manila) are spaces devoted to young and emerging artists. Both Cemeti Art House (Yogyakarta) and Old Ladies House (Macau) dedicate themselves to woman artists. Amongst these spaces, their responses are contingent to cultural conditions of the city that take precedence over art traditions and community history. They are here for now!²

The New Asia

Cultural commentators and critics are now taking the 'Asian ensembles' into a new conceptual ground. The philosophy behind the new 'Asian' aesthetics is neither a Venetian nor a Rococo Revival. Instead of dressing itself up as a nostalgic kitsch, it is deeply seated in the city's dynamism. *The Sai Yeung Choi Street South* (Hong Kong), *Art-Gu, Dongdaemun-Gu* (Seoul), *Dong Mun* (Shenzhen), *Lan Kwei Fong* (Macau), *Sin Tian Di* (Shanghai), *San Li Tun* (Beijing), *Si Mun Ding* (the area near West Gate, Taipei), *Boat Quay, Robertson Quay, Clarke Quay* (Singapore), the open area around *Petronas Twin Towers* (Kuala Lumpur) are new settlements for: shopping arcades, D-I-Y shops, cyber cafes, karaoke-bar cum discos, ethnic restaurants, teahouses and other places which have liberated the cities' physical barriers, unfolding options for all generations. The aesthetics of futuristic cities hinge on openness, fluidity, density, diversity, dialogue, noise, Do-it-yourself, etc. The 'creative industry', as an integral yet subordinate part of tourism, will be crucial for a sustainable development of the urban environment. This topic will be pertinent for discussions in the foreseeable future.

The concept of a novel city's Alternative spaces are the impetus for transforming cultural productions. The mobility and diversity of alternative spaces would likely displace the current establishments. As a consequence of de-colonization, Asian cities are met with unprecedented challenges under globalization. Operating as vanguards for alternative discourses, Asia's alternative spaces are still a local and community-based entity. It would be interesting to differentiate the conceptual visions and practices of alternative spaces and to compare them to various civic museums and galleries. The boomerang effect of Asia's alternative spaces would expose the speculation for an alternative model in Asia. Based on the novel city and developmental concept, it is the cultural differences that presuppose Asia's alternative nature.

Cultural difference and the Asian globe

In the face of homogenous 'one world culture', two issues confront Asia's cities. On one hand, these cities are neither analogous nor identical.



Left: Baena Bamboo Curtain
Bottom Left: at the Victoria Harbor between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon
Right: para/site
Bottom Right: Hong Kong University big arrow

The unresolved tensions between local heritage and communities further intensify cultural and social differences. On the other hand, Asian cities share common problems. Economically, the Asian financial crisis dating back to 1997 was widely felt in the region. The recent 9/11 tragedies further exacerbate the situation. The modernization and renovations of the city bring about cultural development, and subsequently a new space that accelerates acculturations and synchronizations. As colonialism draws to a close, Asian cities are now confronting an unprecedented identity crisis.

However, the development of Asian cities and satellite towns are multi-faceted. The Internet surfers are able to visit virtually the cultural facilities from around the world, undermining the real visit of museums and libraries, turning them as sites for 'amusement'. A new art system in Asia is emerging. Like a conglomerate into greater power and networking, dynamic art villages, districts and open cultural spaces, art and design shops, alternative galleries, city green houses, temporal warehouses, renovated industrial plants, multi-purpose workshops, teahouses, art cafes, 24 hours bookshops, leisure inns, TV art channels, on-line cyber war spaces, renting-out museums, electronic publications, artists' colonies on homepages, are now on the move. These phenomena demonstrate the power to re-define the generic city. The distinctions between center and marginal, software and hardware, permanence and ephemerality, work and leisure are all beginning to break down. The synchronization of Asian cities thus opens up new spaces and dimensions for everything.³

History does not seem to repeat itself under globalization, yet it narrates an incessant story in a local context. The model of appropriation always operates in line with modernization. The next beta version of 'World Alternative Cities' in Asia are 24 hour action-cities in 'non-stop' real time.

The overall characteristic of a new Asia is its pluralism and eclecticism. The creative power of alternative spaces is made adaptive to the marketing strategy of enterprises. In turn, the official art establishment is obliged to form new alliances with artists and alternative spaces. The top-down approach will be scrutinized, thereby transforming the overall planning, programming, and budgeting of cultural policy. By delegating power to the community, creative spaces and strategies will become a conduit for abandoned values and new orders to bridge. A new plateau of humanity is in the making.



The “local” affects the “global”

'Think Globally, Act Locally' is a worldwide strategy that can be applied everywhere on all levels. There is sample evidence that Asians, by acting locally, might affect the Eurocentric 'global'.

Hollywood as an icon for world culture has co-opted the 'alternative look' of Hong Kong cinema in its eclecticism.⁴ The acclaimed Tokyo and Hong Kong International Film Festivals are international attractions. After the reception of popular Japanese culture over the past twenty years, recent Korean TV drama brings new hype to Taipei, Hong Kong, and possibly the world. When it comes to enhancing informational capabilities, Korea is claimed to be at the forefront, having aggressively pursued development and rapid technological advancement. According to a recent article from The New York Times, the penetration of Korea's Internet services now stands at the highest level in the world and has become an essential part of contemporary culture. In 2001, China was recognized as the number one nation that has achieved the greatest economic leap forward. In a recent policy address by the Chief Executive of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the goal of Hong Kong is to attain the identity of 'Asia's World City'. While on the other shore of South China Sea, executive Yuan from the Taipei Cultural Council pursues his city as the 'Asian Media Center' at the time when there are very

few alternative spaces devoted specifically to new media arts as in the case of *LOFT* (Beijing) or *Videotage*, *Video Power* (Hong Kong). With little exception, Singapore's Ministry of Information and the Arts proclaims itself as 'A Hub City of The World', sidelining the issues of censorship towards artist-run spaces like *Substation*, *PKW*, or *Singapore Art Museum*. No matter whether these empty labels for Asian cities are valid or not, if Asian alternative spaces form a united front, the art world order might be turned over in one night!

Stemming from the 80's to the 90's, artists in alternative spaces have been seeking their own identities through rediscovering their heritage and community. They realize the importance of belonging by regaining interests in an abandoned place.

As the system and infrastructure takes shape together with adequate institutional and private support in place, alternative spaces in Hong Kong, Taipei, Seoul, and Singapore would consolidate their influences.

Modernism: a failure to commitment and post-modern Asian aesthetics

In contrast to small alternative art spaces, the developed Asian system is a mere 'Big White Elephant' that perpetuates Modernism into the corners of Asia. A Modernism, committed to resolve social and technological problems, fails to meet the mass expectation and places efficiency over social and other values. Can alternative spaces still play a productive role in a post-modern age?

The exteriority of Asia's alternative spaces is too often reflective of the changes of the city: exotic pluralism and hybridity, in order to accommodate its alternativeness in an establishment. The theme of 'Pause' would undoubtedly play an active role in continuing the role of the Gwangju Biennale to 'legitimate the underground' into a larger system. The situation resembles P.S.1's affiliation with MoMA in New York City.

Reappearing City

Asian cities are evolving to become a diverse and complex cultural field at the expense of local heritage and cultural identity. Ackbar Abbas's dis-

course on 'disappearance' is undoubtedly a common experience celebrated among alternative spaces in Asia. *The Workshop* (Hong Kong), *Quart Society* (Hong Kong), *SOCA* (Taipei), *Long Tail Elephant* (Guangzhou), *Surrounded by Water* (SBW; Manila), *Art Village* (Singapore), *Studio Shokudo*, *Sagacho Exhibit Space*, *P3 art + environment* (Tokyo), came to a closure with the erasure of many forgotten histories. However, Asia is rich in its potential for the re-appearances of 'past' and 'new' histories.⁵

How independent are independent art spaces?

This is a key question. Can they still be a critical supplement for the establishment of a city? How can they be instrumental in the development of art and culture? How can they question our amnesia towards modernity outside of the museum and gallery system? An assessment of the mission statement of Asia's alternative spaces may give us an answer in the reconfiguration of a new cultural landscape and the conceptual mapping of a new utopia.

One rarely finds a social space outside of the commercial gallery and museum, as in the case of BASH (Beijing), where artists can find the guiding tenets for actions and sharing. Alternative spaces provides hope to the asceticism of the establishment, an opposition to the mal-administration, adverse conditions of exhibition venues and insufficient resources and facilities that they usually face.

The new tactics for subverting the art system might be reflected on the art making. To one of these non-profit alternative spaces such as Sly Art or Shin Leh Yuan (Taipei), the sophistication in the production of artworks is not a primary concern. Their anti-object attitude as originated from oriental philosophy is apparent in the strategies of display and the daily operations of the venue.

The limitations imposed on Asia's alternative spaces not only reveal the negative sides of modernism and globalization, but the oppressed existence of alternative spaces also validates a pluralism that the open city should demonstrate. Life under the economic boom is supposed to be stable, cheerful, harmonious and substantial. However, alternative spaces portray a city as a negative spectacle that is subversive and futile. The complete contemporary urban city is now defined by its alternative otherness and rival competitiveness. For examples, the exhibition projects at *Whashang Art District*, curated by Huang Hai Ming, hosted at the same time as The Taipei International Biennale 2000, and the partnership at *East Link*, *DDM Warehouse*, *BizArt* (Shanghai) with The 2000 Shanghai Biennale demonstrated the dynamic and parallel functions of alternative spaces.

City transformation

As seen in the larger context of both regional and global perspectives, the structure of an art system changes relative to the changing ideology of its surroundings. When the time comes, the idea of alternative spaces would be consolidated and realized. No longer a minority or an underground



force, the alternative spaces in Asia will boom with social recognition. A good example is the well-received video project Port co-organized by BizArt in a park of Shanghai during 2001. Alternative spaces in Asia are working with new sets of codes, ethics, and working models that will expose the problems and issues of the system. They will set examples to show how public institutions should become more receptive to the community. They can also identify issues pertaining to locality and open up spaces for contemplations. In marked contrast to Rem Koolhaas' description of Asia's 'Generic City', 'Alternative spaces' in Asia have thus far shifted the basis for identifying cultural differences. The campaign for governmental recognition and support by grass-roots organisations in Whashang Art Village, Singapore Art Village and Oil Street Art Village have demonstrated a visionary leadership for a different approach towards to cultural institutions.⁶

Geurilla war amongst alternative spaces

Some alternative spaces in Asia are merely extensions for government to fund activities for international recognition. While some alternative spaces are ornamental—just decorating the pub with some installations or video works—one would not expect any provocative work from these galleries.

Some alternative spaces are well designed and furnished with good ceilings, white walls and wooden paving. Even for an expert, it is hard to differentiate them from commercial galleries without paying attention to the differences in their programming. If alternative spaces were commercially viable, what differences would it make when comparing to commercial spaces?

For years, there has been a split of views in Taipei over the issue of Whashang Art District. The organising of two similar international symposia in the same month is evident of an acute competition between 1aspace (Cattle Depot Artist Village) and Para/Site Art Space. The future of Asia depends on the way different cities and their infrastructure compete.

New City Typology Villages surrounding the city

Government facilitated art villages, e.g. Taipei Art Village (Taipei), International Art Village (Nantou) or Sanmien Artist Village (Guangzhou) are the most generic places that one can imagine. On the contrary, artist-run villages such as Artist Village (Taidong), Tam-awan (Baguio), Whashang Art District, Tongzhou Artists Community (Beijing), Singapore Art Village (Singapore), Kobe Art Village Centre (Kobe) as well as the former Oil Street Art Village (now Cattle Depot Artist Village), have generated a lot of energies in their respective communities, generating controversial discussions among the artists. The incentive for their gathering is not only to attain a stable studio space for long-term development, but also to compete for more exhibition opportunities and support. In comparison with the official art villages, they could gradually become institutionalised and be a part of the city's cultural hub.⁷

Café bar cum showroom

Integration with commercial incentive is a survival strategy for all generations of alternative spaces in Asia. Current galleries such as *Song Ha Gallery in Art Town* (Pusan), *Club 64*, *HOK7* (Hong Kong), *big sky mind* (Manila), *Café Pulilan* (Bulacan), *Cup of Art Café Gallery* (Bacolod), *Blind Tiger Bar* (Quezon) are primal examples for survival nowadays. The presence of bar and restaurant is a sign for entertainment culture. *LOFT*, *Top Floor Gallery*, *Courtyard Gallery* in China also take up commercial strategies to support their continued display of political art. The next generation of alternative space could be those cyber café-bar cum galleries, i.e. *Risiris Internet Pub* (Quezon), which also helps to generate more of the city's new opportunities.

Abandoned warehouse for city regeneration

Modernisation and industrialisation has turned architecture into a commodity for consumption. This process inevitably displaces the original function of a building. Many abandoned warehouses, failing to comply with the city's aspirations and standards, have become a site for artists to conduct experimental projects. In Taiwan, renewed urban spaces, i.e. Whashang Art District and the Rail Storehouse Reused Scheme. The spaces taken by artists to re-model as new sites, such as *Chiayi Rail Warehouse* (Chaiyi) and *Taichung 20 Warehouse* (Taichung), are used for exhibitions and workshops. Also in Mainland China, places like *BASH*, *CAAW* (Beijing), *DDM Warehouse and Eastlink* (Shanghai) are old warehouses being scrutinized in terms of its politics and artistic activities. Regardless of their conservative operations and strategies, they, nevertheless, re-present the forgotten history and narration behind modernisation.

Extensionss of artist studios

Whenever an artist emerges, there will be an alternative space. Artists usually use their studio spaces for experimentation. They open their studios and hold public exhibitions to elicit inputs and insights. The past or current *Third Space Arts Laboratory*, *Lupon Art+Design+Lifestyle* (Quezon), *Kwok Studio*, *Happening Group Studio* in *Shanghai Street Artspace*, *Desmond Kum Studio*, *James Wong Studio*, *Para/Site Artspace*, *Workshop* (Hong Kong), *SOCA*, and the *Bamboo Curtain Studio* (Taipei) are well known examples for exhibition and workshops. Besides, there are artists like Carlos Celdrans and Er Dong-keung that employ their homes for public projects.

Embassy-affiliated cultural centers and disguised spaces

There are some embassy-affiliated cultural centers such as The Goethe Institute, which play a



great role in promoting contemporary art and international exchanges. After The 2000 Shanghai Biennale, many alternative spaces closed. *BizArt*, with a sound administrative back up, remains as the most active and popular in Southern China. It seems that the strategy to collaborate with embassy-affiliated institutions can protect the space from censorship and financial deficit. The *Chang Mai Art Museum* (Chang Mai) is itself a disguised alternative space, though it adopts the name of 'Museum'. It showcases students' experimental work from time to time. Strictly speaking, *Galeri Petronas* inside *The Petronas Twin Towers* (Kuala Lumpur) and *Dimension Endowment Of Art* (Taipei) are not alternative spaces. However, their devotion to education, research, publication and display of experimental art make them an alternative among other conventional alternative venues.⁸

Space networking

With the rise of alternative spaces in Asia, a new cultural geography is in formation. Asian cities are now being redefined by alternative spaces with new propositions. The new inter-regional networking is a worldwide strategy and is not exceptional to these alternative art spaces. The Asian counterparts are no longer working alone on the periphery of the cultural arena. In recent years, there is a trend to build up a network for mutual support and recognition in the hope of reshaping the global order. On one hand, the institutionalisation and commercialisation of Asia's alternative spaces could finally defeat some of their original

missions as a counterforce to the establishment. Thus, some of the alternative spaces would become a newcomer of establishment or the Third Force? Alternative art spaces, in my view, can retain integrity by maintaining a smaller scale of operation and closer ties to a local community. They should be visionary, with a clear idea of what to do and what not to do.

Left: Hong Kong Water Market at 1aspace

Footnotes:

1. In early 2002, The Japan Foundation Asia Center published a small booklet *Alternative: Contemporary Art Spaces In Asia*, which sheds some light on selected independent art spaces and museums in Asia.
2. See also Eileen Legaspi-Ramirez, *Alternative Spaces: We're Here for Now* in *Transit* Vol. 1, 10-12. pp. 22-25.
3. See *Art Papers* Mar/Apr 2001 Sp. Issue on Conceptual Art.
4. The 49th Venice Biennale saw the erection of a larger-than-scale replica of the famous California landmark, Maurizio Cattelan's *Hollywood* in Palermo, Sicily, an official project outside Venice, witnessing the play and displacement of global influence. For photo, please refer to *Art Forum*, September 2001, p.168.
5. Please refer to *Hong Kong and the Culture of Disappearance*. An Interview with Ackbar Abbas by Geert Lovink in Kassel, Documenta X, July 19th, 1997 and Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong, Culture and Politics of Disappearance*, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota, 1997.
6. According to artist Koh Nguang How, the *Singapore Art Village* is still active without National Art Council's support of a permanent location.
7. Steven Pettifor, *Northern Thailand's Artistic Home*, *Asian Art News*, 2001 September-October, pp.62-65.
8. For more information, please refer to Xiaopin Lin's *Beijing: Yin Xiuzhen's The Ruined City*, in *Third Text*, 1999 Autumn, pp.45-54.

Gareth Williams

Ed Baxter

Gareth Williams, who has died of cancer aged 48, was a founder member of This Heat, a rock trio whose significance and musicality the historically minded listener would favourably compare to Cream or the Jimi Hendrix Experience, but whose recalcitrant experimentalism led them far away from mainstream success.

Williams was born in Cardiff in 1953. After taking his A-levels, he took up a job as a Drugs Rehabilitation Counsellor in Newfoundland. By the mid 1970s he was working in retail as the deputy manager of the Cranbourn Street, Westminster branch of HMV, a post he held with a madcap degree of irresponsibility. Once, to win a television set offered as an A&M sales promotion, he purchased for the shop hundreds of copies of Rick Wakeman's "The Six Wives of Henry VIII". On receipt of the tv, he returned the records as faulty, having himself scratched and made unsaleable the entire shipment. Williams was a fanatical listener and record collector and as such attracted the attention of guitarist Charles Bullen and drummer Charles Hayward. Hayward was rehearsing with Bill MacCormick, bass player with Matching Mole, the pair having been persuaded by an unexpected Top 30 hit to reform Quiet Sun, a band they had formed at school with Phil Manzanera, then guitarist of Roxy Music. Bullen handled the guitar parts and Williams was brought in to add a missing spark of vitality to the group, but his lack of musical training was anathema to Quiet Sun's formal brand of progressive rock. For Bullen and Hayward, however, Williams was a revelation, a maniacal performer whose intuitive approach was urgent and deeply liberating. There had been non-musicians working in rock before, notably Brian Eno in Roxy Music, but Williams was perhaps the first to take centre stage rather than being merely adding colour to familiar forms. The trio set about reinventing rock in a manner reliant on accident and deliberately devoid of technique.

This Heat played its first concert on February 13 1976, mere days after it had formed. (As a sign of their confidence from the outset, they included "Rainforest," recorded at this gig, on their debut LP). In the early days noisy instrumental improvisations dominated; but This Heat were also adept at songs and gradually achieved a balance between the abstract and the formal. In concert, trance-like ambient soundscapes would typically fade into riotous, even danceable, anthems before giving way to a heady shower of glorious noise or leery episodes of half-stoned

silence. This Heat attracted an audience of fervent admirers and enthusiastic critics, for whom Williams became "the musician's non-musician."

This Heat took to using tape recordings in concert, with Williams becoming adept at playing cassette machine as a solo instrument. For them tape was a legitimate element in its own right, a creative rather than recreative musical source which allowed them to bring into the mix sounds from another time and place. It provided This Heat with an other-worldliness which arose directly from their own lives and previous playing experiences and which lent the band a singular vibe of vertiginous alienation. They played at extremely loud volume, usually in pitch darkness. From the start, and with a kind of light-headed arrogance born of the unexpected discovery of something new, This Heat deliberately set themselves apart from other groups, an attitude that prefigured the punk explosion that followed and partially engulfed them a few months later—and which they in turn influenced as pub rock simplicity gave way to post-punk experimentation. They issued a spoof manifesto: "This Heat was made out of the collective desire of its members not to be in any other groups." They set up their own rehearsal and recording studio in Brixton, Cold Storage. Here they recorded their first album, "This Heat" (1979), taking over two years to assemble it. The maxi-single "Health and Efficiency," perhaps their finest single work, was released in 1980, a deliriously upbeat song "about the sunshine" which allowed Williams to display his now considerable skill as a musical bricoleur. This was followed by "Deceit" in 1981, an LP which put its finger on that fearful era's g-spot, decrying the nuclear arms race and media disinformation in a sequence of exquisitely executed but agonised songs. If it voiced a bitter anger at the world in general, "Deceit" perhaps also articulated the tensions within the band.

By the time it was released, Williams had quit the group. Having once declared that This Heat was the music the three of them made together, Bullen and Hayward nevertheless carried on, now joined by bass player Trefor Goronwy and keyboardist Ian Hill. The band's final concert took place in London on May 18 1982. By then Williams was in Kerala, south India, where he studied kathakali dance-drama. He converted to Hinduism, mainly to gain easier access to temples. On his return to London, Williams co-authored the first edition of "The Rough Guide to India" and



took a Degree in Indian Religions and Music at the School of Oriental and African Studies.

In 1985 Williams with Mary Currie made "Flaming Tunes," a collection of raw yet plaintive songs, domestically recorded and released more or less surreptitiously in a hand-coloured cassette package. While This Heat was angrily engaged with social issues, "Flaming Tunes" found Williams in a calmer, introspective mood, singing suggestively autobiographical fragments: "My body moves forward. This restless mind runs back like a banner that flaps in the wind."

In the 1990s he played with Hayward in the short-lived avant-rock project, Mind The Gap, and was one of many players featured in Hayward's monthly "Accidents & Emergencies" improvisation series at the Albany Empire in Deptford. He was also active as a promoter as well as working occasionally as a DJ and pursuing his own musical projects, recording obsessively at home, notably with Maritn Harrison (one of This Heat's pool of engineers) and singer Viv Corringham. The advent of compact discs had led to a renewed interest in This Heat and the albums were re-released, along with the archival "Made Available: John Peel Sessions" and "Repeat". Williams was diagnosed with cancer in September 2001. Early in December 2001 the three members of This Heat got together once more and tentatively rehearsed with a view to a live performance or new recording. Before any resolution to their diverse musical or temperamental differences could be reached Williams died, on Christmas Eve. He is survived by his partner, Nick Goodall.

[Gareth John Williams, musician, born April 23 1953; died December 24 2001]

Dodgy Analogy

John Barker

Cornelius Castoriades was a tough-minded activist and intellectual who, under pseudonyms like Chalieu and Pierre Cardan, wrote for the group Socialisme ou Barbarisme which—in the 50s and 60s—theorised and gave encouragement to revolutionary notions of workers' self-management, organisation from below. (See Interview in Variant 15 Volume 1). Like many others he withdrew from active politics in the changed circumstances, the defeat post-1974, but did not in any way 'sell out', even as a respected academic on the 'socio-philosophical circuit'.

In the late eighties what has variously been called Chaos, Complexity and Emergence theory had come to be a big player in 'social' as well as natural sciences. Initially it looks sympathetic, with its emphasis on organisation from the bottom up, but Castoriades had the bullshit-detector of tough-minded people and wrote in Done and to be Done (1989) "The hive or herd are not societies", this when the hive was such an important analogy for Complexity theory. As its populariser (and Wired magazine editor) Kevin Kelly puts it: "The marvel of 'hive mind' is that no one is in control, and yet an invisible hand governs, a hand that emerges from very dumb members." Castoriades' wariness of such stuff, he having been a populariser of notions of self-management, was clearly a threat to its ideologues. Thus at a conference of the Complexity Group at the LSE in June 1997, he was singled out to be patronised by one Gunther Truebner: "At a global level, the unpredictable dynamics of autopoiesis argues against the unrealistic view of those like Castoriades who believe that it is possible to move world society in a desired direction via deliberative global democratic process."

Castoriades' wariness comes from a mistrust of the use of natural science analogies in the world of human relations, analogies which seem always to have the same result and perhaps, who knows, the same aim, that of making ahistorical assumptions about human society. In the language of structuralism and post-structuralism, the signifier is not respected for what it is and so can be used in an ideological and often far-fetched manner to say something about the signified, or rather to shape the signified. Exactly the moment to be wary.

I want to argue that analogies in either direction between the human world and that of natural sciences are a useless hindrance when used from a humanist progressive viewpoint; to be fought against when used to justify inequality and realpolitik; mocked when used as disappointment displacement by 'libertarian' theorists; and the ahistoricism in all three brought out into the open.

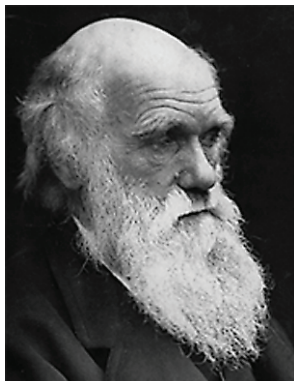
The Sokal affair

On the face of it, this theme, of dodgy analogies, is similar to the Sokal affair, in which the New York physicist in tandem with Jean Bricmont wrote a spoof article with the wonderful title Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity, which was accepted and published by the prestigious cultural studies journal *Social Text*. In fact it is this aspect of the business, the misuse of analogy, which has disappeared in the furious argument that has simmered on. Sokal sounds like someone who is very pleased with himself, and the editors of *Social Text* like parody patriarians of the left. No humble pie from them: when discovering that what they had published was a hoax they responded instead: "From the first, we considered Sokal's article to be a little hokey... His adventures in PostmodernLand were not really our cup of tea...Sokal's article would have been regarded as somewhat outdated if it had come

from a humanist or social scientist."

The affair then, as a critical citizenry, is not our business, especially when one sees how much of an ego 'n budget turf war it is between comfortable academics, despite *Social Text*'s attempt to garner our sympathy thus: "There is nothing we regret more than watching the left eat the left, surely one of the sorriest spectacles of the twentieth century." Its supporters make valid points about the undermining of objective peer reviews in scientific journals under pressure from corporate research financing and that in general science does not take place in a historical or cultural vacuum, which is in part shown up by the back and forth of misleading analogy. However the journal's leading defender, Stanley Fish, himself falls back on a dodgy analogy well-used by social reality philosophers, i.e. that baseball is socially constructed and is also real. All very well, but if it were decided tomorrow that baseball was pointless it would cease to be a social construct, but what of the physical world?

The claim of Fish and *Social Text* is presumably that examining the social constructs involved in science is in itself a democratic project; that it puts questions in to beyond-question natural science. For such a project however, clear popularising of what scientific work is being done, plus investigations of what scientific developments are being followed and what not followed, and who is financing and patenting such work, is much more to the point.



Darwinian theory

The analogies taken from science and used in the most racist and inegalitarian manner are clearly those taken from the Darwinian theory of evolution. That it is his version that should set the tone and change the world, that and its timing, is also evidence of the theory as in part a 'social construct', one suited to the dominant culture of a recently industrialised and colonising Britain. It doesn't need *Social Text* or its theorists to tell us. Sinyavsky may have a spiritual axe to grind but is not far off when saying that:

"the theory of evolution has a hint of parody about it and arouses the suspicion that it originated under the influence of the factory, which inspired the basic analogies and suggested the idea of progress as a world-wide conveyor-belt." (A Voice from the Chorus).

Neither Darwin nor the geologist Lyell can fail to have been influenced by the Industrial Revolution in which small, imperceptible changes had made a revolution, and created markets in which a failure of flexibility, a failure to adapt were punished by market forces.

Analogy then is used both ways, in undeclared fashion in some scientific theorising, and then back again into the social world. Neo-liberalism/old laissez faire has never ceased to use Darwinian analogy: survival of the fittest as smugly articulated by US Treasury Secretary O'Neill for

example at the World Economic Forum of 2002. Or yet another management guru book this year from Seth Godin in which he argues that what biology has learned by studying the struggle for survival 'can inform us as we think about the struggle for products for market share; firms for talent; countries for tax base; or start-ups for venture capital'. The firm for political influence and public money might be closer to the mark! This follows on directly from the Social Darwinist, Herbert Spencer who coined the 'survival of the fittest' phrase. He was worried by the domestic British underclass, and in modern neo-liberal fashion (or Manchester liberalism as it was then called), opposed state intervention even in the matter of sewage. Using Darwin he could rationalise the extermination of that underclass if, for example, cholera could be kept to the ghettos.

What is historically perverse, and remains so, is that the other prop of capitalist economic ideology, that is neo-classical economics which emerges soon after Darwin, uses a completely different analogical framework from natural sciences. As Stephen Toulmin has pointed out, late 19th century economists sought to become the Newtons of the human sciences and elaborated their neo-classical equilibria in supposed imitation of his *Principia Mathematica*. Extraordinary how they got away with it when the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics and the mathematics of Poincare (these both before Quantum Physics) clearly implied how limited the Newtonian model was. An anti-temporal model which can stomach neither just Marx, nor Adam Smith.

Spencer was not interested in colonies or colonisation but an inhumane and truly repulsive racism which was present in the Darwinian view of the world attracted others. It has been used by racists ever since, and is also dependent on two-way analogy. 18th and 19th century scientific exploration was driven largely by economic and colonial ambitions with a fundamentalist edge to it, that is for European men to show their own superiority to themselves, and thus justify their entitlement to the rest of the world. Prim, uptight people like Darwin who, when first encountering naked Fuegians on the Beagle voyage wrote: "I could not have believed how wide was the difference between savage and civilised man. It is greater than between a wild and domesticated animal."

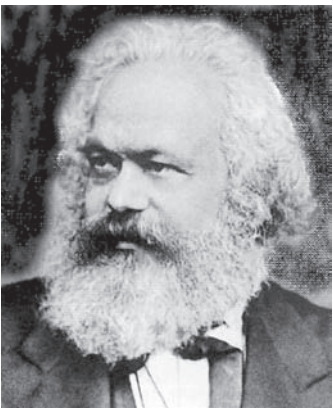
The analogy between men and animals, types of men, gave credence to rationalisations of a genocidal process of plunder. It is said that Alfred Wallace who had also hit on the idea of natural selection, 'was convinced that the wonderfully intricate ecosystems of the tropics were not made for man alone and that he loved their native inhabitants whom he found more graceful, ethical and democratic than Europeans. It was not however his version of evolution we have come to know, it is Darwin's who, in 1859 in a letter to Lyell, thought that the process of natural selection might also occur between the human races, "the less intellectual races being exterminated." It is said that he was horrified by first hand experience of racist genocides in Argentina and Tasmania but it obviously was not enough to deter him from going public with the thought of the letter in *The Descent of Man* (1871): "At some future period not very distant as measured in centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace throughout the



world, the savage races." With such a lead it was hardly difficult for monstrous theorists like Robert Knox to rationalise the genocides that were to happen on an even greater scale in Africa, and to do it without reference to the civilising mission of Christianity.

And so it goes on, 'Social Darwinism, only nowadays it's worse, with the Spencerian and racist strands tied together. In the face of all the evidence provided by many geneticist like the scrupulous and tolerant Reith lecturer Dr Steve Jones to the contrary, people like Charles Murray and his Bell Curve still now have not just credence but an impact on social policy with theories which invariably claim inherited differences in intelligence on racial grounds where the so-called underclass is also racially defined.

Its impact has been on welfare policies in a period when capital has decided it can no longer afford to be decent and more specifically been both a pre- and post-event rationalisation of the truly awesome number of Afro-Americans in prison, and the even greater number otherwise restrained by the US legal system.



Marx and the Darwinian

In the light of all this, it is sobering that Marx would have liked to dedicate *Capital* to Darwin, and that it was only Darwin's bourgeois fear of being associated with such a disreputable person which prevented it. One can see the attraction for Marx; Darwin as the demystifier, the revolutionary with a template of progress, a scientific template, whereas in fact it meant that *time necessarily involving change* could be restricted to the bio-geological sphere. Ironies abound here because like Sinyavsky a hundred years later, Marx wrote privately of how Darwinism was Manchester liberalism writ large. *History* in effect was allowed in the biological long term, but even then it derived from the existing conditions of capitalism.

Looked at now, the desire of Marx to create a scientific socialism, has become a terrible burden, one which made the rigidities, distortions, stupidities and crimes of Marxism-Leninism seem like continuity from Marx himself. Looked at now, it is a shame how notions of historical laws like falling rate of profit, have obscured the complex description of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall and its countervailing tendencies, one which illuminates much of what is happening now in the 21st century as does the analysis of equalization of rate of profit. I suspect that in the case of Marx the need for it to be scientific socialism is partly because at the time it was de rigueur if one was to be taken seriously but also to bolster the spirits with the thought that one day a humanist communism would have to come about.

The increased emphasis on scientific socialism is normally blamed on Engels and his *Dialectics of Nature* but it is not justified, it was a joint project. He has though been accused by hard-line ecologist Robin Jenkins of deliberately repressing the significance of the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics because he well understood that this clearly implied limits to the economic growth that would render capitalist property relations untenable, and limits to the general idea of progress.

Certainly the Christian intellectual Dean Inge welcomed entropy on precisely this score, but at the same time felt "that the sum of things should

end in nothingness is a painful stultification of our belief in the values of life." Ilya Prigorgine on the other hand suggests that the irreversibility implied by the 2nd Law strengthened 'the idea of an historical development of nature', the very idea that had attracted Marx and Engels to the Darwinian theory of evolution.

The 2nd Law which states that in all transfers of energy, energy is lost, and disorganisation increases to the point of entropy has been used analogically in the service of many ideas beyond its scope. I do not believe it should be used at all in relation to human social relations whether 'progressive' or otherwise. It is this law which undermines the Newtonian equilibria by asserting the irreversibility of some processes, and thus the 'arrow of time', but this 'historical' natural law is still just that, a natural law.



Quantum Physics

Some forty to fifty years later Quantum Physics knocks away the props of equilibria some more. It was, and remains, exciting stuff, but it too produced its analogisers which are taken apart in a wonderful book of the 1930's, L. Susan Stebbings' *Philosophy and the Physicists*. She too is excited, and as a democrat committed to a well informed and critically intelligent public: sympathetic to popularised accounts of Quantum Physics she is sharp on analogies which far from clarifying, confuse or are misleading.

This often took the form of anthropomorphism (and still does, 'nature does this, and nature does that') and at other times is used to justify a form of philosophical idealism. "It is odd," she says, "to find the view that 'all is mysterious' is to be regarded as a sign of hope. The rejection of the 'billiard-ball view' of matter (i.e. Newtonian-based false analogies of the atom with astronomy) does not warrant the leap to any form of Idealism." Aware of this she notes that Lenin too was worried about the new physics on precisely this score but is somewhat sceptical as to his understanding it, and his ideological methodology. Another of those ironies that is bound to arise when leftists tangle with natural sciences as a source of ideology, is that Anton Pannekoek in his "Lenin and Philosophy" argued that Lenin himself is philosophically an idealist.

Stebbins is especially stringent on two points: an intellectual slither that allows the concepts of Quantum Physics to be applied to the everyday world; and the way analogy dressed as argument was being used to assert 'free-will'. Both of these have re-appeared to lurk in the dodgy analogies of computer age theorising wherein almost anything that is non-Newtonian, that is 'mysterious', must be good. On the first point she quotes Ernst Zimmer: "A table, a piece of paper, no longer possesses that solid reality which they appear to possess; they are both of them porous and consist of very small electrically charged particles which

are arranged in a particular way." If that is the case, as she asks, what does solid mean if nothing is solid?

In the matter of free will, it was true that a previous scientific determinism said it was an illusion, but to make of quantum physics and especially Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, that cause and effect are out of the window and the electron 'free to choose', and then from this make it a safeguard of human freedom from science is not sustainable... "Either way," she says of pre-and post-Quantum Physics, "this use of physical science to countenance a theory of interaction of humans is unwarranted." When cause and effect are out of the game in the social world we are on very dangerous ground as we can see for example in the US attitude to Kyoto.

Given this history, it is not altogether surprising that it is this physics which Sokal used in his analogical spoofs: asserting for example that Lacan's psychoanalytic speculations have been confirmed by recent work in quantum field theory; that Quantum Physics is consonant with 'postmodernist epistemology'; and then making a more inclusive pastiche on the same lines held together with words like nonlinearity, flux and interconnectedness, with Deleuze one of his targets. These are the buzzwords of the computer age theories of Chaos, Complexity and Emergence in which the non-localised phenomenon of QP has also been prominent, and which yet again cannot resist analogies with the world of 'human interactions'.

The Selfish Dawkins

Other theorising with analogical overtones have also been given a new lease of life by the computer age. Here I am thinking especially of Richard Dawkins, his selfish gene and his memes. Dawkins is an inveterate maker of analogies between natural sciences and the social-political world. In the 1989 edition of *The Selfish Gene* he starts to apologise but cannot help still defending the analogy of 'the working people of Britain' as individuals not understanding the need to restrain their greed for the good of the whole group. If it was wrong it was because "'actually it's best not to burden scientific work with political asides at all." Why? Because they become dated, a comment which then allows him to turn this apology into an attack on J.B.S. Haldane.

There is also a kind of heroic masochism in his insistence on the primacy of the gene and its replication, with the species (including humans and therefore himself) having the role merely of its carrier. Replication of code being at the centre of this model, the computer age provides an analogy-become real, since it is also inherent to its technology. Thus he now writes of the possibility, that in his writing slides into likelihood, of the self-evolution of software code. With a generalisation breathtaking in its pomposity he writes, "Life is just bytes and bytes and bytes of digital information," just as for Zimmer it was electrically charged particles. At the same time he takes the same model into the social world with the notion of memes, 'media viruses', or as Dawkins puts it, "non-genetic replicators which flourish only in the environment provided by complex communicating brains." "The apparatus of inter-individual communication and imitation" is then analogous to the gene's concern with its replication. But the gene and meme must also have a phenotypic effect that allows it to survive into the next generation. On the face of it, this seems to depend on the discredited Lamarckian notion that acquired characteristics can be passed on to others or genetically to the next generation, a theory which caused havoc to Soviet farmers following Lysenko, and has come up again recently in the Motorola-financed research of Sadie Plant which purports to show that Western teenagers sending text messages have developed more flexible thumbs, and that this is, or rather will be, evolutionary.

Allowing Dawkins his meme for the moment, he tells us that whether it is an idea or a tune, it must to be popular. "If it is a political or religious idea, it may assist its own survival if one of its

phenotypic effects is to make its bodies violently intolerant of new and unfamiliar ideas...If the society is already dominated by Marxist or Nazi memes, any new meme's replicatory success will be influenced by its compatibility with this existing background." In which case, we could well do without memes altogether since they would have to be both conformist and intolerant to successfully replicate. Fortunately we are doing without them, these analogies-made-real. It also implies, the meme as idea, a passivity on the part of receptors. It is this characteristic which it has in common with some of the ways in which Chaos/Complexity/Emergence theory has been used. "The marvel of the 'hive mind' as Kelly put it, "emerges from very dumb members."

Spooky butterflies

If Darwinian theory has the whiff of the factory about it, Complexity theory has not just the whiff, but has been enabled by the number-crunching capacity of computers and their networking facility. In one important respect it has also followed the phenomenon of Quantum Physics that Susan Stebbing did not touch on, that is the concept of non-locality, what Einstein called "spooky action at a distance", whereby atomic particles, widely separated, are somehow in instantaneous contact with each other. Again, it is to be remembered that this is a world of sub-atomic particles, but one can see how the 'butterfly effect' of Complexity theory, must have been inspired by it even if it is not so radical in its implications. Inspired by it and the holistic 'spaceship earth' notion which flourished briefly after the first landings on the moon, until it reverted to the neo-liberal version of globalization.

With the butterfly effect there is still a strong element of cause and effect, even if it is the case that a small cause may have a big effect far away. To be clear here, I have no intention of dissing theories and phenomenon lumped together as New Age, like the ideas of Rupert Sheldrake, the energy emissions of rocks, or those telepathic experiences we have probably all experienced; nor of a holistic view of the world or ourselves. What does need to be looked at warily though is the vague assumption that anything which claims to be non-Newtonian or non-reductionist, de-centralised, or holistic is good in itself. Not all management gurus are Darwinian, management guru Richard Pascale has urged a "holistic" approach to management and Tom Peters, management evangelist entitled one of his recent best-sellers, "Thriving on Chaos".

In the case of the 'butterfly effect' it's as well to remind its theorists that BIG causes in one part of the world have even bigger effects in other parts and that these are located in fixed positions, with the underdeveloped world invariably the passive receptor of mostly negative effects caused

by 57 varieties of self-interest in the first world. Since they believe that moving "world society in a desired direction via deliberative democratic process" to be a naïve illusion, they do not welcome this reminder. It is also not accidental that Castoriades should be in their line of fire, he as a theorist of workers self-management, decentralisation of authority and organisation from below, for on the face of it complexity theory seems to be on the same side so to speak, holding out the same promise. It is not the case.

Out of Control

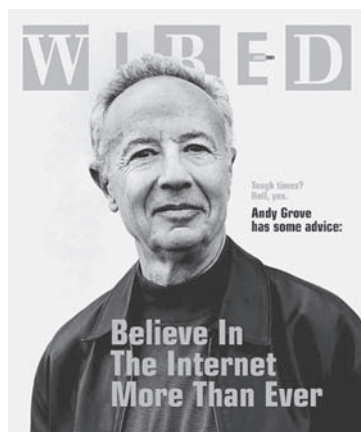
It is perhaps unfair to pick on Kevin Kelly and his book *Out of Control*, given that he is a magpie of across the board natural sciences examples used in Chaos/Complexity/Emergence theory, but in the end he is important because he can't help but give the game away. He rushes the reader through a series of analogies using as his connector the phrase, 'very much as in', from hive, to whirlpool, to the brain, and to a colony of ants. In the chapter 'Machines with Attitude', we get a tour de force of flim-flam, jumped from quote to idea and back again. He begins with a quote from the philosopher Daniel Dennett, "The idea that the brain has a centre is just wrong. Not only that, it is radically wrong." At this point one is already wondering where this is going, given that Dennett is also a fanatical supporter of Richard Dawkins and ferocious attacker of holistic biologists like Richard Lewontin. His being used by Kelly is an early signal that despite the apparent complete difference in outlook there may be something similar going on between the 'determinist' Dawkins and Complexity theory, that is an underlying notion of human passivity.

From Dennett he moves to saying that the collapse of the USSR is solely ascribable to the instability of any centrally controlled complexity; to an approving reference to 'the bureaucracy of the brain'; to the notion that "there is no 'I', for a person, for a beehive, a corporation'; to the unacknowledged analogy from Quantum Physics that it is likely that intelligence is a probabilistic or statistical phenomenon. Suitably softened up from this scatter gun, we are then hit by Roger Brook's notion (one he is developing technologically) that "You can build a mind from many little parts, each mindless in

itself." This is just one version of the essence of Complexity/Emergence theory, that is 'the generation of higher-level behaviour or structures within systems made up of relatively simple components'. And it is attractive with its promise of the non-hierarchical, and one can see that the wonderful internet and its World Wide Web is a realised paradigm. But if it goes further, and the web itself is the analogical basis for a whole view of the world, it becomes a rationale for the privileged of the world, when there is no one for the rest of the world to negotiate with for something better for themselves.

Writing of Roger Brook's use of small robots he says "With no centrally imposed model, no one has the job of reconciling disputed notions; they simply aren't reconciled. Instead various signals generate various behaviours. The behaviours are sorted out (suppressed, delayed, activated) in the web hierarchy of subsumed control." Then in a brazen piece of reader flattery and final candour he says, "Astute observers have noticed that Brooks' prescription is an exact description of a market economy." Brooks? The market economy is also where Kelly's hive analogies take us. It could equally well be von Hayek and his capitalist utopia of wholly rational consumers and their preferences; their simple but rational decisions making an economy that runs itself.

Kelly of course has to ascribe it to someone else, Roger Brooks, because at the same time he has a self-image as the rebel, the heroic pioneer. This romanticisation seems to be common to the users of dodgy analogy. It informs the tone of Richard Dawkins and those other serial analogisers, Deleuze and Guattari, the first of whom was outed for dodgy analogising by Sokal, but who would seem to be the complete antithesis to neo-liberal ideology given that they are 68ers who would certainly have been sympathetic to Castoriades' ideas in the days of Socialisme ou Barbarie. In their understandable reaction against the disaster of Marxism-Leninism, the non-hierarchical becomes an end in itself. In their understandable desire to celebrate this quality in the World Wide Web, they have recourse to the rhizome, an analogy taken from plant roots, and this analogy takes the place of argument. They can't stop there either but must then make an analogy out of nomads and create a self-image of the techno-nomad who, ironically is just another variety of elitist vanguard, the outsider variety who, though not a capitalist, is one of the world's relatively privileged.



Bloody Hell

A report from Ramallah from an American nurse & humanitarian aid worker



Tuesday April 2

Bloody hell. Just got out of Ramallah yesterday, managed to catch a ride to the checkpoint with the Associated Press in their bullet-proof vehicle, then walked across with a few bullet-proof vested/helmeted journalists, me in my scrubs do not know how to describe what is happening in Ramallah, but I will try. I must I am here (Gaza, Bethlehem, Ramallah, then Lebanon) for 6 weeks, working as a volunteer for the PCRf (Palestine Children's Relief Fund—a non-profit, non-political, humanitarian relief organization). Teaching NRP/NICU stuff, bringing donated supplies, and consulting for potential future relief efforts. I had been in Ramallah since the 23rd March. On 28th, the situation appeared to get worse, with 150 tanks surrounding Ramallah and closures put into effects I had been staying at the hospital since Thursday—it was safer and I was useful there; not really teaching much anymore but instead working ER, OR, NICU, or wherever needed an extra nurse. The staff that could make it in was working back to back shifts, walking past tanks to get to and from work or sleeping at the hospital. Everybody not anaemic donated blood. All supplies are running low, sometimes there was not enough food. The ambulances are prevented from transporting the wounded, or any other patients or staff—they were stopped and arrested, and the ambulances were then used by the Israelis in house to house searches and executions. The patients that were able to make it to the hospital in time were gun shot wounds—mostly to abd. and chest, or head. I saw many corpses with close range wounds/execution style. The morgue is over-full. The Israelis are lying about what is happening—i.e. they did enter Ramallah hospital on Sunday, I was there. The press is censored [sic]—unable to report what is occurring as they are also prevented/detained, threatened, injured, or escorted out. I am hearing that the news in the States is very pro-Israeli as usual. How is this allowed? There are many major human rights issues here.

I feel helpless to do anything. I wish now that I would have stayed in Ramallah. I am a nurse, and a human being. It was very hard to leave, but the hospital staff advised me to go, to get out when I could. They were very afraid about what might happen (and now is happening). I am safe in Jerusalem now, but feel useless—unable to do anything except write emails. And today the situation there is so much worse—the press just told me that now snipers are firing at anyone leaving the Ramallah hospital. In Bethlehem today the

Israelis are targeting churches, have shot and killed a priest and also shot a nun—and the situation is the same for the hospital there, no one allowed in or out. They continue to surround Arafat's compound, cutting off water, food, electricity, and any contact. They shot Palestinians trying to surrender, in their underwear. They continue to conduct house to house searches and executions, they are casting a wide net and arresting many, many people—I saw trucks filled with blindfolded Palestinians pass by the hospital. There were major bombings done early this morning, many people must be hurt or dead. I can't think of anything else to say right now—the situation is unimaginable. I have no words for this except to plea; “please help stop this”. Americans need to know what is happening, they need to pay attention. They need to be aware that their news is very biased; they need to search for the truth, and the causes of symptoms such as suicide bombers. They need to re-evaluate their definition of terrorism and who the terrorists are, to include politics that would oppress another people so hard and for so long. All need to take responsibility for our own government's actions and inactions. Please, at least, pray for all the people here—esp. in Ramallah and Bethlehem... am very tired. I'll try to email more later.

Wed. April 3

Here's an update: spoke with the director of the Ramallah hospital—they are running out of medicines, supplies, and oxygen. There are still many casualties and dead in the streets that they are unable to get to. They are worried about diseases that come with having a morgue full again, and garbage in the streets piled high, and unable to get to or bury the dead. They were able to bury 29 bodies yesterday in a mass grave, during a lift of the curfew for a few hours—but soldiers still shot at people in the streets even during this time, killing a 10 yr old boy. There is no electricity, no food and now no water at the hospital. A female doctor was killed in Jenin. In Bethlehem yesterday, they targeted churches—shot and killed a priest, and injured six nuns. They are now shooting at priests that have come to the check point to try to get in to Bethlehem. The hospital and ambulances there are also unable to get to the injured. The press just arrived back to the hotel, telling me that the convoy of supplies trying to get into Ramallah will not be let in.

Some of the babies in the NICU will die without oxygen—of all the indisputable innocents.

Thurs. April 4

I don't even know where to start anymore—except to say that the situation is even worse. There are hundreds of calls to the ambulances at Ramallah every day, pleading for help for the critically sick and injured—but they still are not allowed to do anything or transport anyone. I spoke with a Finnish researcher who was allowed out of Ramallah yesterday who says that there are medical persons detained, along with hundreds of Palestinians. She said that there are hundreds of injured in the bombed areas of Ramallah that are unable to get help. As for Bethlehem, I spoke with press who had been able to get part way in yesterday before being chased out by soldiers, reporting that “every door has been blow open, riddled with bullets”, dead bodies behind the doors, a missile in a child's bedroom, “water pipes everywhere are totally destroyed”. “This is the most horrible vandalism imaginable—clearly just for punishment” of the Palestinian people. The Israeli soldiers abide by no rule—shooting anyone now. They have expanded the militarized zones, and are not allowing journalists, or anyone in. They do not want anyone seeing what they are doing—this is the most frightening. Peaceful demonstrations at the check points are targeted with tear gas, international convoys of supplies are not allowed in. The situation at the hospitals remains critical—their supplies, medicines, and oxygen are running out. The Ramallah hospital was able to get three oxygen cylinders two days ago, but convoys of medical supplies and food were not allowed in at all yesterday. There is not enough food, either at the hospital or for the rest of Ramallah. There is still no water or electricity—I can not imagine how the medical staff is coping, the nurses in the neonatal unit must be taking turns ventilating the babies by hand with whatever oxygen they have left. How long can the rest of the world watch this, doing nothing?

PLEASE AT LEAST LET THE FOOD, WATER AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES IN!

The Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement between People 64 Star Street, P.O. Box 24

<http://www.rapprochement.org>

The centre is a non-profit making NGO, started in 1988 during the first Intifada. PCR runs community service programs, youth empowerment and training programs. PCR is also very much involved in the non-violent resistance against the Israeli Occupation to Palestine.

Ian Brotherhood

Tales of the Great Unwashed

Frank was happy. He'd always been happy, but he couldn't remember ever feeling as happy as he was now.

He shifted back into fourth and overtook the log-bearing artic. He didn't often overtake, even on this dual carriageway, but hated sitting behind these larger vehicles. The sets of double-wheels were a worry. You never knew where these trucks had been uplifting or delivering, perhaps on open building sites. Da knew of a friend of a friend—a truck had picked up a half-brick lodged between the rear wheels. The friend of the friend had been keeping a safe stopping distance from the lorry. The lorry increased speed, so did the friend of the friend, still maintaining a safe distance. The increased speed gave force enough to the lodged stone, and when it was released from the wheels it followed a trajectory which brought it across the safe distance, through the windscreen and into the head of the friend of the friend's nine year old son in the passenger seat.

Frank felt himself smile as his new two-litre estate surged past the log-bearing truck. Another little problem sorted.

And that's where the new estate and the new house and the new life had come from. Sorting out one problem after another, no matter how small. Directing attention to every possible source of anguish or upset and dealing with it as and when it arose. The early days were distant now, and only ever recollected to bolster the happiness he had found with Francie. The children had been unexpected, but only ever added joy to their lives. Jamie had only just turned two, was safely strapped into his seat, and beside him, her head resting on her brother's shoulder, the older Kelly was already nodding off.

He tightened his right palm about the cushioned steering wheel and gently dropped his left fingers onto Francie's thigh. Her fingers covered his and gently pressed them against the warm denim. He didn't have to look at her to know that she was smiling. Even this, just a simple weekly shopping trip, was a treat.

He veered onto the exit just as the carriageway lamp-masts flickered red. A glance at the digital clock—almost seven o'clock. The clocks would be shifted forward on Sunday, Summer would be official. There would be ever-lengthening evenings in the garden, tinkering with sweet-pea netting and twisting custom-length plastic-coated wire about strategically placed canes; wiping down the brilliant white plastic furniture in advance of a neighbourly visit; exotically varied salad greens tossed and sprinkled with ready-made dressing in the conversation-piece carved mahogany bowl Francie had picked up at the boot-sale; jokes and beer and laughter in open-air, with kids safely asleep upstairs as they drew cardigans and sweat-shirts against the freshening coastal breeze. And conversation. Relaxed, assured exchange between people who had at last found their place in the world. Francie wouldn't say much. She never did. But Frank would speak for both of them, of their happiness, their gratitude, their sense of completeness.

The short-stay car-park was full. Not a problem. The long-stay was slightly further from the mall, but convenient trolley-parks meant that the kids could be transported to the centre without exertion. Kelly protested at being woken so suddenly after having found sleep, but Jamie

was content to sit in the trolley-seat, chubby fingers tightly gripping the thin steel bar. Francie had to delve into her purse for a pound-coin for the other trolley. Kelly refused to be lowered into the seat—at five she was a big girl and wanted freedom to browse and wander, just like her mum.

The floodlights scanning the pyramidal glass mall signalled a wave of drizzle, but Frank saw it and beckoned Francie hurry to the covered pavement leading to the hypermart. The first cold heavy drops of the shower did hit them, but with the walk from the car no more than fifty yards it was little more than a refreshing surprise, and Frank shook his head, feigning shock to Jamie's smiling face, and Jamie responded as he did these days, shaking and aping whatever noise Dad made.

My cup is full. Frank remembered the words from God only knows where. It meant you couldn't want more. I've as much as I can handle. It couldn't get any better because there's no more capacity for happiness, there's no space for additional pleasures. My cup is full, yours can be too. It had always seemed to induce a sort of paralysis in the trainees.

Trainees. Apprentices. Proteges. And wasn't Frank once himself one of them? Hadn't he taken on those roles, played them to their natural, inevitable conclusion, then moved on? The others had only to do likewise, to follow that same process. Simple.

The massive stone obelisk at the entrance to the store was mounted on a brick-built plinth. Frank almost hit the thing, had to stop the faulty trolley, reverse it a yard or so before renegotiating his approach to the revolving doors. He stopped beside the monument, waiting until Francie had got herself, her trolley and Kelly into the segment of moving door. The erection was new, but looked impressively worn, the slogan 'We Care' apparently worn by centuries of weather. Jamie reached out towards the object, curious. Frank knuckle-tapped it. The dull reverberation throughout the structure amused his son. Frank struck the fibreglass skin again with open palm. The deep boom made Jamie shriek delightedly, but a vacant segment of the door was emerging uncontested, so Frank gripped the bar of the trolley and shifted himself and his son into the slowly moving space which would take them inside the store.

Frank's trolley was almost full after half an hour, but a lot of the space was taken up by the huge box of nappies. Two bumper discount packs of best quality disposables in the lurid green toy box which came as a free gift. He scanned a triple-pack of cheese and pineapple family-size pizzas and dropped them atop the toy box. Using the scanner reminded him of being in the menswear department so long ago, his very first job, labelling shirts and socks. So many jobs, so many places, so many people, all still there in his head, names and events of twenty years ago. Unforgettable.

But tomorrow, the better life would continue to throw up more surprises, more challenges, more names and events to add to the stock. And this new intake of trainees were proving every bit as challenging as any group he'd had in the two years since becoming section manager. It wasn't as if they confronted him directly, but it seemed that the bad press being given to call centres had

predisposed many of them to find fault from day one. He had even gone to the trouble of constructing, after appropriate approval from head office, a small area of contemplation in the corner nearest the windows, just by the water-dispenser. He had encouraged those feeling stress to seek a quiet moment there during designated breaks, but he'd yet to see any of his fifty charges taking advantage of the four-foot square Japanese-style stone arrangement. The white stone chips had come from the garden centre, and the grapefruit-sized granite stone was one he had taken from Glencoe as a souvenir of a long week-end with Francie in their courting days. The arrangement was a miniature version of Frank's favourite place in his own garden, a patch which he kept scrupulously clear of leaves dropping from the overhanging cherry tree, and permanently sprinkled with cat repellent so that the carefully raked chuckies would not be disturbed or soiled. Perhaps his people would appreciate the smaller model if they had the chance to see the original. Last week, early as always for his shift start, he had entered the office to discover a large plastic turd carefully placed alongside the gleaming granite. He had disposed of it before the trainees started, but thought better of raising the subject at the morning pep-talk.

The crack of the jar was dulled as the pasta sauce burst a huge red exclamation mark beneath the trolley. Jamie had palmed it off the shelf and was already reaching for its neighbour. Frank grabbed his son's hand away and tried to settle the shifting container, but the clumsiness of his rescue effort dominoed another off. It landed in the thick crimson green-specked puddle of chunky tomato and pepper pieces, but did not break. Jamie, mouth open, leaned back, staring up at the huge banks of fluorescent striplights suspended twenty feet overhead, and kicked his legs outward, one welly boot connecting with Frank's groin. Frank closed his eyes, suppressed the cry into a whimper. When he opened his eyes there was a woman with pail and cleaning cart and a DANGER-WET FLOOR sign already planted afront the trolley.

I'm sorry hen, I'll pay for it, Frank said, but the woman smiled and shook her head and told him he wouldn't believe how much stuff she had to clear up of an evening, it wasn't worth worrying about. He insisted, but she asked him to move the trolley and seemed not to want to deal with him further.

The sweat on his neck was cold. The shirt would be dirty. It had been a long day, but a fresh one tomorrow. Friday, it would be his lime BHS. The tie would be the one Jamie got him for his birthday. Francie took care of his wardrobe. Never a problem.

No sign of Francie in the Bakery aisle. She might be getting the yoghurts. Kelly moved across the end of the aisle. Francie must have sent her back to look for them. Frank pushed the trolley faster, had to jerk it straight. He got to the end, but Kelly had gone back down the Italian aisle. He reversed three steps to the bakery, hoping to catch her doubling back. Sure enough, there she was, but again she walked through the distant juncture without glancing his way. Not a problem. They would meet up eventually.

He made sure the trolley was sufficiently

distant from the neatly racked bags of morning rolls before removing his overcoat. He was sweating all over. It was always the same in here. Maybe the air conditioning, or the glaring lights. It never happened in the work right enough. Always in here. Uncomfortable. Discomfort. Not a problem. Move to a cooler place. Anyway, he still had to get the meat.

Francie didn't ever get the meat. She was veggie, always had been. But Frank liked his meat, so did the kids. Burgers, but only the best. Quarterpounders for Frank, Spaceburgers for Jamie, pork dinosaurs for Kelly. And maybe a hough. Still cold enough to justify a pot of soup, and Francie would prepare a full pot of pure veg while Frank's ham slow-boiled separately on Saturday afternoon. Sunday dinner, Francie's soup, with customised meat version for the men. A joint to follow as well maybe ?

A joint. That lad would have been given his written warning at end of shift this evening. He'd been moved onto twilight on Frank's recommendation. If he couldn't go out partying at night then he wouldn't be turning up half-pissed and reeking for the morning start. Twice he'd been caught away from his station unauthorised, and both times he'd been found in the toilet with a strong smell of cannabis about the place. No conclusive evidence, and even a body search by Security had revealed nothing more incriminating than a packet of very large cigarette papers. But he was certainly at it, and would know tonight that his coat was on a shoogly peg. Frank would see him tomorrow at shift-change. Probably best to say nothing, but an idea to have Security on their toes just in case. It

wouldn't be the first time someone had cracked.

Leaning his torso over the deep chest freezer, the cold air combed his scalp as he selected a twenty-four pack of Spaceburgers. Jamie voiced recognition, and Frank let him briefly brush the frosted box before tossing it into the trolley. Jamie whined dislike of the unexpected dampness on his fingers, so Frank took the small hand in his and wiped off the moisture finger by finger.

Then Kelly was beside him, trying to climb into the trolley. Frank lifted her up, kissed her on the nose and cuddled her. She laughed and pulled at his ears, but her weight was making such play ever more difficult, and he had to lower her as Francie neared, her trolley now full.

Are you alright love ? came the question, and Frank was smiling, nodding, and Francie's hand was at his forehead, her face contorted with worry. She looked suddenly old, like her mother.

Frank left the trolley beside Francie's and moved across to the chilled fresh meat. Huge plastic wrapped gammon joints. Joints. The houghs were usually here. They must have changed the displays.

Kelly had started to cry, Francie was quietly warning her.

Houghs ? Frank leaned over the chiller, stared down into the chest. A Reduced section, a burst packet of drumsticks, one had toppled into a corner and was already partially frozen against the wall along with flecks of what looked like parsley and a bright orange fragment of paper, perhaps from a waffles box. A sellotaped bag of oven chips was only twenty pence.

Frank moved left, keeping both hands on the

edge of the unit. They must be here somewhere. Perhaps above. He looked up. At eye level were long flat trays of stewing steak. Further along. Francie's hand on his arm, she was saying something. He turned, saw her mouth moving, but his smile didn't seem to reassure her.

He reached out and picked up a packet, cool plastic, soft inside, but he didn't know what it was. He wondered if it was what he had been looking for, if it was needed or wanted. He fingered the computer-printed label. The small dotted letters formed words, but even after reading them he still didn't know what it was.

Kelly had jumped up and grabbed him from behind. She must want a piggy back. He laughed and groaned and gripped the unit tighter, and Francie's head was also leaning into the chiller, trying to see his face. Jamie was laughing. Frank raised his hands to remove Kelly's, but found only his own shirt, soaked and cold. He turned around, leaned against the cabinet as he slid down. Kelly was way over by Jamie, and both children were watching him as he reached the floor.

Faces framed by distant girders, gently swaying striplights. Eyes closed, Francie's face on his, cherry blossom petals drifted their way towards the Glencoe stone. Somewhere behind them, Jamie and Kelly laughed goodbye.

Muslims and the West

after September 11

Pervez Hoodbhoy

Pervez Hoodbhoy is professor of nuclear and high-energy physics at Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad. This article is based on a speech delivered at the Center for Inquiry International conference in Atlanta, Georgia, 2001.

America has exacted blood revenge for the Twin Towers. A million Afghans have fled US bombs into the cold wastelands and face starvation. B-52s have blown the Taliban to bits and changed Mullah Omar's roar of defiance into a pitiful squeak for surrender. Usama bin Laden is on the run (he may be dead by the time this article reaches the reader). But even as the champagne pops in the White House, America remains fearful—for good reason. Subsequent to September 11th we have all begun to live in a different, more dangerous world. Now is the time to ask why. Like clinical pathologists, we need to scientifically examine the sickness of human behaviour that impelled terrorists to fly airliners filled with passengers into skyscrapers. We also need to understand why millions celebrated as others died. In the absence of such an understanding there remains only the medieval therapy of exorcism: for the strong to literally beat the devil out of the weak. Indeed, the Grand Exorcist, disdainful of international law and the growing nervousness of even its close allies, prepares a new hit list of other Muslim countries in need of therapy: Iraq, Somalia, and Libya. We shall kill at will, is the message.

This will not work. Terrorism does not have a military solution. Soon—I fear perhaps very soon—there will be still stronger, more dramatic proof. In the modern age, technological possibilities to wreak enormous destruction are limitless. Anger, when intense enough, makes small stateless groups and even individuals extremely dangerous.

Anger is ubiquitous in the Islamic world today. Allow me to share a small personal experience. On September 12th, 2001, I had a seminar scheduled at the department of physics in my university in Islamabad, part of a weekly seminar for physics students on topics outside of physics. Though traumatized by events, I could not cancel the seminar because sixty people had already arrived, so I said, "We will have our seminar today on a new subject: on yesterday's terrorist attacks." The response was negative. Some students mindlessly rejoiced in the attacks. One said, "You can't call this terrorism." Another said, "Are you only worried because it is Americans who have died?" It took two hours of sustained, impassioned, argumentation for me to convince my students that the brutal killing of ordinary people who had nothing to do with the policies of the United States was an atrocity. I suppose that millions of Muslim students the world over felt as mine did, but heard no counter-arguments.

If the world is to be spared what future historians may call the "Century of Terror," we must chart a perilous course between the Scylla of American imperial arrogance and the Charybdis of Islamic religious fanaticism. Through these waters we must steer by a distant star towards a careful, reasoned, democratic, humanistic, and secular future. Else, shipwreck is certain.



Injured innocence

"Why do they hate us?" asked George W. Bush. This rhetorical question betrays the pathetic ignorance of most Americans about the world around them. Moreover, its claim to injured innocence cannot withstand even the most cursory examination of US history. For almost forty years, this "naiveté and self-righteousness" has been challenged most determinedly by Noam Chomsky. As early as 1967, he pointed out that the idea that "our" motives are pure and "our" actions benign is "nothing new in American intellectual history—or, for that matter, in the general history of imperialist apologia."

Muslim leaders have mirrored America's claim and have asked the same question of the West. They have had little to say about September 11 that makes sense to people outside their communities. Although they speak endlessly on rules of personal hygiene and "halal" or "haram," they cannot even tell us whether or not the suicide bombers violated Islamic laws. According to Dr. Taha Jabir Alalwani, chair of the Virginia-based (and largely Saudi-funded) Fiqh Council, "this kind of question needs a lot of research and we don't have that in our budget."

Fearful of backlash, most leaders of Muslim communities in the US, Canada, and Europe have responded in predictable ways to the Twin Towers atrocity. They have proclaimed first, that Islam is a religion of peace; and second, that Islam was hijacked by fanatics on the September 11. They are wrong on both counts.

First, Islam—like Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, or any other religion—is not about peace. Nor is it about war. Every religion is about absolute belief in its own superiority and its divine right to impose itself upon others. In medieval times, both the Crusades and the Jihads were soaked in blood. Today, Christian fundamentalists attack abortion clinics in the US and kill doctors; Muslim fundamentalists wage their sectarian wars against each other; Jewish settlers holding the Old Testament in one hand and Uzis in the other burn olive orchards and drive Palestinians off their ancestral land; Hindus in India demolish ancient mosques and burn down churches; Sri Lankan Buddhists slaughter Tamil separatists.

The second assertion is even further off the mark: even if Islam had in some metaphorical sense been hijacked, that event did not occur on September 11, 2001. It happened around the 13th century. Indeed, Islam has yet to recover from the trauma of those times.

A dismal present

Where do Muslims stand today? Note that I do not ask about Islam; Islam is an abstraction. Moulana Abdus Sattar Edhi and Mullah Omar are both followers of Islam, but the former is overdue for a Nobel Peace Prize while the other is a medieval, ignorant, cruel fiend. Edward Said, among others, has insistently pointed out that Islam carries very different meanings to different people. It is as heterogeneous as those who believe and practice it. There is no "true Islam." Therefore it only makes sense to speak of people who claim that faith.

Today Muslims number one billion, spread over 48 Muslim countries. None of these nations has yet evolved a stable democratic political system. In fact, all Muslim countries are dominated by self-serving corrupt elites who cynically advance their personal interests and steal resources from their people. No Muslim country has a viable educational system or a university of international stature.

Reason too has been waylaid. To take some examples from my own experience: You will seldom encounter a Muslim name as you flip through scientific journals, and if you do, chances are that this person lives in the West. There are a few exceptions: Abdus Salam, together with Steven Weinberg and Sheldon Glashow, won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1979 for the unification of the weak and electromagnetic forces. I got to know Salam reasonably well—we even wrote a book preface together. He was a remarkable man, terribly in love with his country and his religion. And yet he died deeply unhappy, scorned by his country and excommunicated from Islam by an act of the Pakistani parliament in 1974. Today the Ahmadi sect, to which Salam belonged, is considered heretical and harshly persecuted. (My next-door neighbour, also an Ahmadi, was shot in the neck and heart and died in my car as I drove him to the hospital. His only fault was to have been born in the wrong sect.)

Though genuine scientific achievement is rare in the contemporary Muslim world, pseudo-science is in generous supply. A former chairman of my department has calculated the speed of Heaven: it is receding from the earth at one centimetre per second less than the speed of light. His ingenious method relies upon a verse in the Qur'an which says that worship on the night on which the Qur'an was revealed is worth a thousand nights of ordinary worship. He states that this amounts to a time-dilation factor of one thousand, which he plugs into a formula belonging to Einstein's theory of special relativity.

A more public example: one of two Pakistani nuclear engineers recently arrested on suspicion of passing nuclear secrets to the Taliban had earlier proposed to solve Pakistan's energy problems by harnessing the power of genies. The Qur'an

says that God created man from clay, and angels and genies from fire; so this highly placed engineer proposed to capture the genies and extract their energy. (The reader may wish to read the rather acrimonious public correspondence between Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood and myself in 1988 on this subject, reproduced in my book *Islam and Science—Religious Orthodoxy And The Battle For Rationality*, published in 1991).

A brilliant past that vanished

Today's sorry situation contrasts starkly with the Islam of yesteryear. Between the 9th and the 13th centuries - the Golden Age of Islam - the only people doing decent science, philosophy, or medicine were Muslims. For five straight centuries they alone kept the light of learning ablaze. Muslims not only preserved ancient learning, they also made substantial innovations and extensions. The loss of this tradition has proved tragic for Muslim peoples.

Science flourished in the Golden Age of Islam because there was within Islam a strong rationalist tradition, carried on by a group of Muslim thinkers known as the Mutazilites. This tradition stressed human free will, strongly opposing the predestinarians who taught that everything was foreordained and that humans have no option but to surrender everything to Allah. While the

Mutazilites held political power, knowledge grew.

But in the twelfth century Muslim orthodoxy reawakened, spearheaded by the cleric Imam Al-Ghazali. Al-Ghazali championed revelation over reason, predestination over free will. He refuted the possibility of relating cause to effect, teaching that man cannot know or predict what will happen; God alone can. He damned mathematics as against Islam, an intoxicant of the mind that weakened faith.

Islam choked in the vicelike grip of orthodoxy. No longer, as during the reign of the dynamic caliph Al-Mamun and the great

Haroon Al-Rashid, would Muslim, Christian, and Jewish scholars gather and work together in the royal courts. It was the end of tolerance, intellect, and science in the Muslim world. The last great Muslim thinker, Abd-al-Rahman ibn Khaldun, belonged to the 14th century.

Islam under Imperialism

Meanwhile, the rest of the world moved on. The Renaissance brought an explosion of scientific inquiry in the West. This owed much to Arab translations and other Muslim contributions, but that fact would matter little. Mercantile capitalism and technological progress drove Western countries rapidly to colonize the Muslim world from Indonesia to Morocco. Always brutal, at times genocidal, it made clear, at least to a part of the Muslim elites, that they were paying a heavy price for not possessing the analytical tools of modern science and the social and political values of modern culture - their colonizers' real source of power.

Despite widespread resistance from the orthodox, the logic of modernity found 19th century Muslim adherents. Modernizers such as Mohammed Abduh and Rashid Rida of Egypt, Sayyed Ahmad Khan of India, and Jamaluddin Afghani (who belonged everywhere) wished to adapt Islam to the times, to interpret the Qur'an in ways consistent with modern science, and to discard the Hadith (the traditions, or ways of the



Prophet) in favour of the Qur'an. Others seized on the modern idea of the nation-state. It is crucial to note that not a single 20th century Muslim nationalist leader was a fundamentalist. Turkey's Kemal Ataturk, Algeria's Ahmed Ben Bella, Indonesia's Sukarno, Pakistan's Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser, and Iran's Mohammed Mosaddeq all sought to organise their societies on the basis of secular values.

However, like other anti-colonial nationalist currents across the Third World, Muslim and Arab nationalism included the desire to control and use national resources for domestic benefit. Conflict with Western greed was inevitable. Imperial interests in Britain and later the United States feared independent nationalism. Anyone willing to collaborate was preferred, even ultraconservative Islamic regimes like that of Saudi Arabia. In time, as Cold War pressures rose, nationalism became intolerable. In 1953, Mosaddeq of Iran was overthrown in a CIA coup and replaced by Reza Shah Pahlavi. Britain targeted Nasser. Indonesia's Sukarno was replaced by Suharto after a bloody coup that left a million dead.

Pressed from without, corrupt and incompetent from within, secular governments proved unable to defend national interests or to deliver social justice. As they failed they left a vacuum which Islamic religious movements grew to fill. After the fall of the Shah, Iran underwent a bloody revolution under Ayatollah Khomeini. General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq ruled Pakistan for eleven hideous years and strove to Islamize both state and society. In Sudan, an Islamic state arose under Jaafar al-Nimeiry; amputation of hands and limbs became common. Decades ago the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was the most powerful Palestinian organization, and largely secular; after its defeat in 1982 in Beirut, it was largely eclipsed by Hamas, a fundamentalist Muslim movement.

The lack of scruple and the pursuit of power by the United States combined fatally with this tide in the Muslim world in 1979 when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. With Pakistan's Zia-ul-Haq as America's foremost ally, the CIA openly recruited Islamic holy warriors from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Algeria. Radical Islam went into overdrive as its superpower ally and mentor funnelled support to the mujahideen, whom Ronald Reagan feted on the lawn of White House, lavishly praising them as "brave freedom fighters challenging the Evil Empire."

After the Soviet Union collapsed, the United States walked away from an Afghanistan in shambles, its own mission accomplished. The Taliban emerged; Usama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda made Afghanistan their base. Other groups of holy warriors learned from the Afghan example and took up arms in their own countries.

At least until September 11th, US policy-makers were unrepentant. A few years ago Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's U.S. national security adviser, was asked by the Paris weekly *Nouvel Observateur* whether in retrospect, given that "Islamic fundamentalism represents a world menace today," US policy might have been mistaken. Brzezinski retorted: "What is most important to the history of the world? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some stirred-up Moslems or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the cold war?"

But Brzezinski's "stirred up Moslems" wanted to change the world; and in this they were destined to succeed. With this we conclude our history primer for the 700 years until September 11, 2001.

Facing the future

What should thoughtful people infer from this whole narrative? I think the inferences are several—and different for different protagonists.

For Muslims, it is time to stop wallowing in self-pity: Muslims are not helpless victims of conspiracies hatched by an all-powerful, malicious West. The fact is that the decline of Islamic greatness took place long before the age of mercantile imperialism. The causes were essentially internal. Therefore Muslims must introspect, and ask what went wrong.

Muslims must recognise that their societies are far larger, more diverse and complex than the small homogenous tribal culture that existed in Arabia 1400 years ago. It is therefore time to renounce the idea that Islam can survive and prosper only in an Islamic state run according to Islamic sharia law. Muslims need a secular and democratic state that respects religious freedom and human dignity, founded on the principle that power belongs to the people. This means confronting and rejecting the claim by orthodox Islamic scholars that in an Islamic state sovereignty does not belong to the people but, instead, to the vice-regents of Allah (Khilafat-al-Arz) or Islamic jurists (Vilayat-e-Faqih).

Muslims must not look towards the likes of bin Laden; such people have no real answer and can offer no real positive alternative. To glorify their terrorism is a hideous mistake—the unremitting slaughter of Shias, Christians, and Ahmadis in their places of worship in Pakistan, and of other minorities in other Muslim countries, is proof that all terrorism is not about the revolt of the dispossessed.

The United States too must confront bitter truths. It is a fact that the messages of George W. Bush and his ally Tony Blair fall flat while those of Usama bin Laden, whether he lives or dies, resonate strongly across the Muslim world. Bin Laden's religious extremism turns off many Muslims, but they find his political message easy to relate to—stop the dispossession of the Palestinians, stop propping up corrupt and despotic regimes across the world just because they serve US interests.

Americans will also have to accept that the United States is past the peak of its imperial power; the 1950's and 60's are gone for good. U.S. triumphalism and disdain for international law is creating enemies everywhere, not just among Muslims. Therefore they must become less arrogant and more like other peoples of this world. While the U.S. will remain a superpower for some time to come, inevitably it will become less and less "super." There are compelling economic and military reasons for this. For example, China's economy is growing at seven percent per year while the U.S. economy is in recession. India, too, is coming up very rapidly. In military terms, superiority in the air or in space is no longer enough to ensure security; in how many countries can U.S. citizens safely walk the streets today?

Our collective survival lies in recognising that religion is not the solution; neither is nationalism. Both are divisive, embedding within us false notions of superiority and arrogant pride that are difficult to erase. We have but one choice: the path of secular humanism, based upon the principles of logic and reason. This alone offers the hope of providing everybody on this globe with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Desire, and a kind of playfulness

An edited transcription of an 'exchange-situation' at the Copenhagen Free University, 18th March 2002

Josephine Berry: We are sitting in a top floor flat in Copenhagen, we're surrounded by kids' toys, cutlery, crockery, very homely things, yet this is a university, a free university. How did this come about?

Henriette Heise: Initially our desire was to create small institutions where we could work with presentations of art and whatever. After coming back from London and living here again, we thought this is where our primary practice is materialising. We had this spare room close to the stairwell with its own door and, more than a year ago, we came up with the Copenhagen Free University (CFU). Here we can work with people and we can learn.

JB: If you compare it to the Info Centre you did in London—which was another space inside a domestic space, a public/private space—has it called into being something quite different?

Jakob Jakobsen: There were many discussions about the social relations created around an art project like the Info Centre. By changing the emphasis from an 'information centre' to a 'university' it was more an investigation of what actually went on in and around those social relations created in these institutions. At the CFU there is more emphasis on the exchange between people, with the Info Centre the information may have been more specific and non-negotiable than this sort of social situation.

JB: So it's a shift from the dissemination of information to the social relations that produce knowledge?

Howard Slater: If knowledge is created through the social relations then the proprietorship of that knowledge alters. Knowledge becomes more a matter of the general intellect or a communal construction through social relations, rather than specific individuals imparting a pre-formed knowledge.

JJ: What we have been discussing is the relationship between knowledge and life. Instead of just seeing knowledge as some abstracted generalised entity or objectified thing, knowledge is, of course, related to the context and to the social relations in and around it. We are trying to make this university now, here where we live, in our flat, and we are trying to discuss and experiment with the relationship between knowledge and life.

JB: Do you see the CFU as a prototype—if you can abandon the idea that a prototype can be perfectly reproduced—more as a catalyst than a space that can fulfil a lot of those objectives in and of itself?

I'm also wondering about the usability of the space for visitors and what they encounter? How can people have a lasting engagement in the free university, because it's your home? How do people come into this space and what do you think their experiences are with it, how does knowledge get negotiated within that?

HH: Just by saying this is the CFU in our flat in the Northern part of Copenhagen people already start to visualise and imagine what it could be. This initial step must make some people ask themselves what is going on here?

We have visitors coming around where we present whatever is going on at the time, and that creates this situation where visitors give back knowledge of their own. Then we have a very engaged aspect of the CFU where friends and people come and live here in the room that we have made for whatever we can call something like exhibitions—people

ple staying here and working here with us and presenting and sharing their knowledge.

HS: As a self-institution, the walls of the CFU are porous, it's a domestic space as well. So if the university is seen as an investigation into knowledge and everyday life (Asger Jorn describes culture as learning by experience) there's an experiential aspect here isn't there? People are staying, visiting... they're coming to a different form of institution where the experience of learning and discussing is as valuable as the subject-matter of what is discussed. That would be an experience of the social relations that are being established here in that there are no seminars as such, there's nothing organised along the lines of an academy. So there's not only this leakage between being in the university and outside the university, but from that, because experience doesn't stop, an experiential knowledge becomes possible. We maybe have to play this against the normal education establishment and see that the experiences that can be appreciated here and worked with or taken away, the imaginative expectations of what people are going to experience here, are different from the normalising academy where it's perhaps our very experiences that are jettisoned. So the wall there is impervious, you have to almost leave your desires with your coat in the cloakroom. In that sense the self-institution of the CFU is also an experiment in a situation: because a situation, in the terms of the Situationist International, is supposed to enable us to bring all facets of experience into the situation; there's no hierarchy of valid experiences.

JB: Also, the idea would be to create or allow new desires to emerge?

HS: Or make certain desires that are low in the hierarchy come to an equal footing. We've been talking about Charles Fourier recently and it's the same sort of thing; you cultivate the manias, cultivate the passions because that, in many ways, is what makes experience valid!

JB: I don't see that as a contradiction, but a bit of a problem with the CFU in that it's easier to share passions between friends, having jokes that lead to serious things and serious things that turn into jokes, the kind of freedom that goes with friendship and passionate attachment. I was thinking about the conversation we had with the students that came from the Art Academy in Malmo, and how shocked most of them looked, they were probably caught between expectation on the one hand and shyness on the other, and were, I suppose, 'disorientated'. How do desires and the kind of playfulness that is so central to what we're talking about—and to the university and to knowledge and to experiment and to art—get communicated or released with people coming as complete strangers?

HS: The shock might have been the simplicity. To play Josie's comments about passion and inclusiv-

ity back onto the institution the students came from, that institution was in part responsible for the shock.

JJ: We are trying to set up institutions which aren't just playing along with the rational understanding of the public sphere as a neutral and common ground. The idea raised about the council communists was a discussion coming out of the extra-parliamentary ways of organising. As a point of departure it might have been a shock to the visiting students but I think it was very much due to their expectations, because they believed they were going to an art project in Copenhagen and they came here and it was quite chaotic. But I hope we were able to put the strands together in a good way. I learnt something from the discussion and that's important as well. It's a more situation-based way to gain experience—instead of just representing knowledge, representing art, it's important to take part.

HH: Usually people feel quite comfortable about being here maybe because it is a home where people live—people felt freer compared to official spaces like auditoriums and galleries. The discussions went on in an informal way and people were able to stay with their everyday language when speaking. I don't see the informality as a problem; I see it as a power.

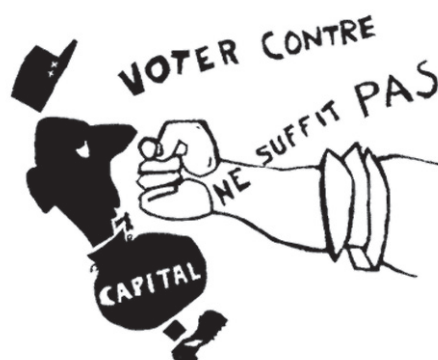
JJ: People enter through the display room that's a kind of buffer zone between the public space and the private space of our flat. But those borders aren't heavily demarcated and people end up in our living room and the discussions go on and we make tea and stuff. I think those encounters, with strangers or not, have been the most intensive—the situations we've gained most from. On the other hand we are keen not to make the university into just a talking shop. We are keen on presenting ideas, research material and art works—to establish a situation that is introducing other knowledges into the equation so the discussions do not just become a therapeutic exchange.

HH: We don't like having structures that necessarily have to be followed. So, if people don't want to say anything, if they don't want to have discussions, it's fine. You can come here and look at the stuff we have.

HS: It's not a matter of taking power as such as becoming acclimatised to being able to create a sense of power amongst ourselves. That it's something like knowledge, like university, like institution, that needs to be questioned. It can be used.

The self-institution thing is about recreating a public sphere or it raises the question 'has there ever been a public sphere?' There's a power in that because there's automatically a conflict or opposition. All these things get opened-up simply by having a Free University, and that's the power to question which is denied people in the education system because you can't question if your experience is left behind at the doorway. From what point can you then question? From what point can you feel a sense of power if your experience is severed from the knowledge that's going to be imparted to you? The conventional institution is very disempowering.

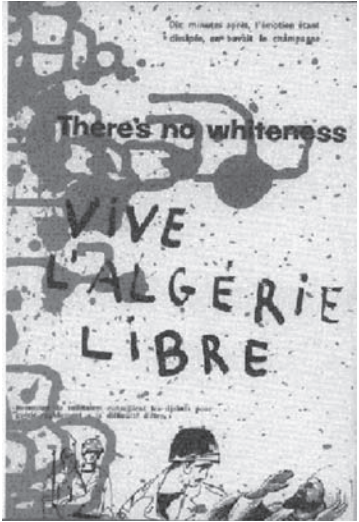
JJ: Making the university was based on the fact that the economy is nowadays very often



described as a knowledge economy, and we can see knowledge becoming an order of capitalist production. This knowledge that is being spoken about is productive knowledge within that system. We thought "ok—if we're living in a knowledge economy we would like to open a university which could valorise other kinds of knowledge that wouldn't fit into that system, knowledges that are excluded from that system." The knowledge going into knowledge economies has to be an alienated knowledge; lone detached from a life outside capital. So that was our question: was it possible to valorise other kinds of knowledge? We're still negotiating these kinds of discussion, because it's not clear what kind of knowledge the knowledge economy is actually chasing after. So, we are trying to discuss knowledge in that landscape. You can see how other universities and educational institutions are trying to live up to the demands of the knowledge economy and producing the right kinds of knowledge-worker ready to enter this kind of economy. And I find the set of passions on offer in that economy quite limited. So, it's a playful or polemical statement to say "ok, we will make a university and we would like to valorise knowledge like other universities do." Establishing this institution is to enter a struggle about knowledge and life.

HS: That points to why I brought up the historical example of the workers councils. If knowledge is used as a component of 'labour-power' then really we've got a parallel problem to the Marxist problem of how to define 'free labour' or 'living labour' in terms of knowledge. The Soviet, Workers Council form could have been an experiment in redefining work outside of the capitalist economy: "what is it necessary to produce, what is 'living labour', how can labour be socially useful...?" these sorts of questions rather than having labour dictated to by capitalistic needs. Similarly there's this interesting parallel, that, in a knowledge economy, with labour-power more explicitly informed by knowledge, a Free University becomes almost a revolutionary organisation. That might be to open a "ski-slope between passion and logic" as Jorn said, but I'm quite interested in this, because it seems then there's another means to rhetoricise around a Free University, that such institutions can be modes of revolutionary organisation. There doesn't have to be four people around a table, it could be twenty, thirty or they could open-up to replace the party political form. It's perhaps useful to use these analogies between an industrial working class form of organisation and the proletarianisation of knowledge workers in a knowledge economy. Perhaps a good thing would be very local free university initiatives to side-step constituted institutions and yet, in the same movement, reinvigorate the constituting dynamic of institutions.

JJ: I believe in 'mass', in lots of self-institutions. I subscribe to the idea of the 'multitude'. Those kinds of institutions can generate a power by being many, and I think if you see similar institutions to the one you're occupied with around you, it is possible for you to push the work you are doing a little further, because then there's a language that is being developed and produced, and a language which can give form to the passions that you're struggling to find form for. It's not offered to you. You have to develop these kinds of languages. So,



factured for you. It becomes a kind of vicious loop in the sense that if you're not partaking in those passions that are circulated for profit, or can be harnessed for profit, then somehow you're abnormal and the whole issue of anti-psychiatric institutions comes again into play, overlapping with educative initiatives, because we've got this barrier to desire in that giving forms to passion is seen as perversion, not normal. Where the aesthetics comes in is in that boost it gives to an articulation of passion and desire.

JB: How do we find this means to collectively identify desires without imposing them or without lapsing into a kind of solipsism of narcissistic desire alone?

HS: That is the misnomer of desire under capitalist society, because desire is stratified with bourgeois individuality. Its individualistic form is rife, say, in terms of going into a little room and putting your 'X' on the ballot paper and also in the coinage that says "I promise to pay the bearer..." It's always an individualistic relation that is encouraged when really desire is in the social structures.

In a way, capitalist society does create mass desires. Maybe it's a way to detourne this creation of mass desires because if we all watch the adverts we all 'plug-in' and that desire is being created as a collective desire, an individualised collective desire, the desire for being 'English' or 'Danish', these are collectively manufactured desires.

The issue of the aesthetic aspect as sort of being downgraded into an access to the means of production is a presupposition of an access to your own desires. For me you explore desires with a material, with a means of expression that you've got to struggle with. And then I think from that you

the ultimate experience of the free university would be for the people who come here to go home and do it themselves. But Henriette does not agree: people should liberate themselves.

HH: I'm fine with self-institutionalisation all over the field, but I have problems with trying to set up a model for others.

HS: In the ABZ of The Copenhagen Free University it says: "It is our hope that you, instead of dreaming of the Copenhagen Free University or London Anti-University or Free University of New York or the Spontaneous University, go where you live and establish your university drawing upon the knowledges in your own networks." Do you think that's too much of a command that implies a model?

HH: Yes, a bit.

HS: Picking up on what Jakob said about giving form to passions. That's where the aesthetics comes in because there's always a struggle with articulation for many people. Maybe artists and writers are amongst the privileged in that they can work to get access to a means of expression or articulation. An initiative like this gives space to many forms of articulation and practice because the aesthetic element, redefined, could help us approach our own desires rather than having the desires or passions made for us. This is really what occurs in capitalist society, that the desires and passions—obviously advertising and branding are a key example—are manu-

begin to enter into a sort of situation of the 'general intellect' where you come 'through' individuality to a sensation of all these links... different people coming to things at different times, different paces, with different vocabularies. And it reveals desire as collective and knowledge as collectively generated passion.

Perhaps self-institutions can give form to desire so it's not so much a matter of imposing desires on others as encouraging what Deleuze & Guattari call 'collective assemblages of enunciation' and being inspired by the wealth of the passions of others. 'New desires' can be 'desires that are new to me' and their forms, the differences between self-institutional initiatives, resist the idea of 'models'. The thing about self-institution is that singularities, the nuances of desire, aren't repressed, but are used as a material.

JJ: Instead of being anti-institutional we're saying "we are building an institution", in this way we aren't maintaining the romantic notion of an outside of institutions. The DIY strategy of setting up 'grand' institutions, like a university, according to your own passions, are productive, and we try to engage in this in both a serious and a playful way.

That's the great thing about the CFU: being able to generate a field of discussion. That is the university: these kinds of situations and these investments.

Instead of just understanding it as a closed-circuit, it is open-ended, open for other passions being invested in it—people who would like to invest in the discussions are a part of it. This mushrooming is in itself another set of social relations, instead of just trying to sit on your own knowledge and promote it in the most...

HS: ... corporate way.

That almost answers the question about self-institutional sustainability. What's the most sustainable thing we know? Perversions and passions? If perversion is compulsion then it's almost the same thing to say perversion and sustainability. On the issue of sustainability, there's a means of expression dimension that Giorgio Agamben has written about: what spurs us to communicate is what is 'unsayable'. We're all struggling with language here, now, trying to express ourselves and that's a form of sustainability. Ok, it can degenerate into a talking shop, but in this instance this has been structured, we've decided to do it at this time, this day. And that struggle with the means of expression, again linking back to aesthetics as a way of getting access to a means of expression, is to give form to the passions and also to find new areas that are 'unsayable'. The 'unsayable' or the unknown—what you don't know or what you haven't experienced—if that's always ahead of you it means you're always struggling, always trying to get somewhere. It might not be forward it might be back. You might be struggling to get back, to a memory, to bring a memory of an experience into articulation. That's a kind of sustainability. The struggle with the means of expression helps a project become sustainable.

JJ: That's the central struggle as far as I see it: the struggle with language. The struggle to produce a space where you can express yourself. That's really a struggle. To come back to life in the knowledge economy, there are no means for those kinds of passionate expressions, those kind of perversions. You have to invent them again.

Copenhagen Free University

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Artist Initiatives in Moscow

Gillian McIver

Moscow is the only city in Russia right now that has enough money to support a thriving commercial art scene. This is not to say that art does not exist elsewhere, but in most cases there is just not the money circulating to support the familiar system of public and private galleries and artist-run centres feeding off each other to create a world-competitive art scene.

Aside from the main private venues such as the *Gallery Marat Guelman*, the *Regina Gallery* and the *XL Gallery*, the lifeblood of the arts in Moscow runs through the network of non-profit and artist-run initiatives that developed during the 1990s. These organisations are at the forefront in creating and promoting innovative work and supporting original, cutting-edge artists.

The non-profit *TV Gallery* promotes time-based/video art and produces cultural programming about art for television. TV Gallery maintains an energetic programme of exhibitions, media production, single-channel and installation video, and vigorously promotes international exchanges. TV Gallery's director Nina Zaretskaya says:

"Our original mission was to connect the world of contemporary art and the artists with mass-media and new technologies, a task no one had actually done in Russia before. In the late 80s we began making TV programs about exhibitions and actions of contemporary art. At the same time there appeared an idea to open a non-profit centre—and so we used the same name: TV Gallery. Our goal is to develop new technologies in art, first of all to initiate, organize and promote video art."

While funding for projects comes from various grants and international institutes, TV Gallery's running expenses are also supported by the private means of the founders, as is the *Zverev Centre for Modern Art*. The Zverev Centre is a unique place: a former greenhouse that has been converted into a gallery in traditional rustic Russian architectural style, with a large garden used for performances and installations. The gallery comprises both the Zverev Museum and an artist-run contemporary art space for exhibitions, happenings and performance.

According to the Zverev Centre's founder Alexey Sosna, "we consider avant-garde art to be a special branch of academic art." The Zverev Museum is an academic institution which preserves, studies, authenticates and promotes the paintings of Anatoly Zverev (1931-1986), the "Russian Van Gogh." The artist-run space is curated and staffed by volunteers who programme

every kind of contemporary art, as well as supporting a renowned contemporary poetry society. The Centre presents a full programme of exhibitions and events throughout the season, and is particularly interested in presenting performative work.

Under the Soviet system, modern art was the preserve of a huge network of institutions, the *National Centres for Contemporary Art* (NCCA's), which ran everything. During Perestroika and after, the system began to fall apart, and now, although there is a comprehensive network of often very fine branches of the NCCA's, the funding just is not in place to support them. In the early 90's the *Soros Centres for Contemporary Art* (SCCAs) and Soros funding programmes were set up by the financier George Soros. These SCCAs took up the slack from the state, and allowed "unofficial" art to flourish, financing up to 50% of the actual realised art projects in Russia. In 2000, however, the SCCA's were closed; artists are still reeling from the fallout of this decision.

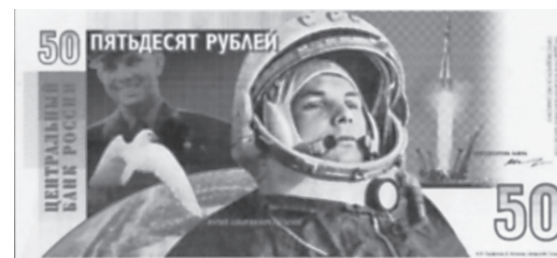
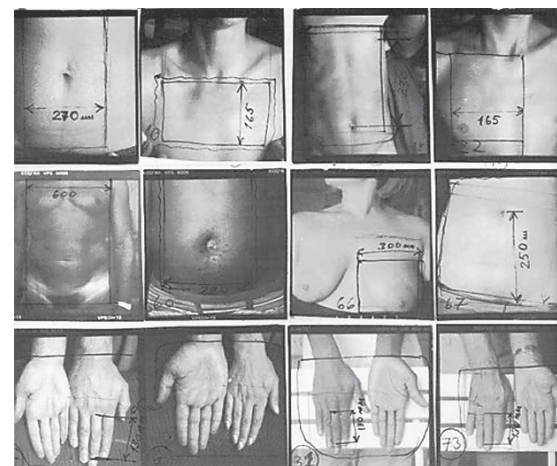
Consequently, the network of small artist-run spaces run on a shoestring and supported by occasional grants, donations and gifts, is more crucial than ever to the development of contemporary art. The *Dom Kultury* venue hosts concerts of jazz and contemporary music, and runs a bar, which allows it to give a home to a small but important artist-run gallery upstairs. In recent years, *Spider and Mouse Gallery* and *Escape Gallery* have become very important institutions in Moscow. Both have extremely high reputations in the Moscow art world, and are increasingly becoming known internationally. Spider and Mouse, founded by Marina Perchikhina and Igor Ioganson, has a strong identity as a video gallery, but also presents mixed media projects: the curators support what is innovative, seeking fresh perspectives from across the country. The gallery is also active in international presentations and collaborations; Perchikhina in particular works extensively in Armenia, and the gallery has partnerships with artist-run centres in Stockholm.

Escape Gallery for years existed as a series of temporary galleries in different domestic apartments. As an artist-run enterprise, it exists for the artists to experiment, present and promote their work. It is well-known among the community of artists, critics and dealers, less so in the popular culture guides. Currently it has found a home in a tiny flat in a huge apartment block at Nagornaya, directly to the south of the city centre.

For artists, participation in exhibitions at any of the artist-run centres affords the opportunity to expose themselves in a supportive yet critically-demanding environment. The eventual hoped-for result, aside from sales or commissions, is to be asked to participate in a large, funded public art event, perhaps sponsored by Sony or Siemens, perhaps even abroad.

The main centre in Moscow for major public exhibition was always the *Central House of Artists*, which shares a building with the stunning collection of the Tretyakov National Art Museum's 20th century collection at *Krymsky Val*. Now most of it is given over to retail galleries of varying quality, and very conservative, boring exhibitions.

However, in April the place comes to life with the annual "Art Moscow" art fair, which highlights some of the directions of contemporary art in Russia.





In yet another direction, *MediaArtLab* is also an artist-run centre, but it now exists in virtual space. It formed as a division of the SCCA to bring together practitioners in art, culture and media including new technology. Never solely concerned with art, it evolved, through its hosting of Internet-art projects, conferences and international multi-disciplinary projects, into one of the strongest media-cultural organisations in Europe. When the Moscow SCCA closed, MediaArtLab was left without a venue, and chose, at least for the present, to go virtual, concentrating on building and maintaining networks of practitioners to facilitate projects conferences and critical dialogues. In 2001 they hosted MediaForum, part of the Moscow International Film Festival, showing alternative video and new media. MediaArtLab is deeply concerned with issues surrounding new technology's impact upon general cultural processes, with issues of centralisation/decentralisation of culture in Russia, and in cross-dissemination of Russian and "foreign" ideas and cultural concepts.

The artist-run centres especially provide opportunities for artists from the provinces, offering them the opportunity to have their work seen and assessed. Though the art scene may be small and unfashionable, it takes art seriously. A vernissage for example, is less an opportunity to see and be seen than it is to argue and debate the finer points (the experience can be terrifying for the Western artist!).

One of the main differences between the life of the artist in Moscow and in the Western capitals, is that it is just not at all fashionable to be an artist in Russia. It is fashionable to be a businessman, a pop star, a sports hero—but not an artist. No-one goes to art school for fun or to be cool. No-one pursues art unless they really feel a desperate, burning drive to be an artist—and often not even then. Although there is rarely any money in art anywhere, this is even more the case in Russia. There are few rewards except integrity, passion and belief in the timeless value of making art.

Contacts:

Dom Kultury Arts Centre

Orchinnikovsky Pereulok, 24/4
11318 Moscow
Metro: novokuznetskaia

Central House of Artists/New Tretyakov

Krymsky Val
Metro: Oktyabrskaya Sad

Art Media Centre "TV Gallery"

6, Bolshaya Yakimanka Str.,
109180 Moscow
Metro: Oktyabrskaya Sad
Tel.: (+7 095) 238 0269 Fax: (+7 095) 238 9666
<http://www.tvgallery.ru>

Zverev Center for Modern Art

Novoryazanskaia 29/2
Moscow 107066
Metro: Baumannskaya
095 265 6166

Gallery Guelman

7/7, building 5 Malaya Polianka Street
Moscow 109180
Metro: Oktyabrskaya Sad or Polianka
Tel./fax (7- 095) 238-8492
e-mail: gallery@guelman.ru
<http://www.guelman.ru/>

Regina Gallery

1st Tverskaya-Yamskaya Street,
Moscow
(between Tverskaya and Teatrnaya Metro stations)
Leningradsky Prospect, 58 (in the yard)
Metro: Aeroport

Escape art space

Nagornaya Street 23, korp.2
Moscow 113186
tel. 095 127 0919
e-mail: ayzen_escape@mtu-net.ru
<http://www.escapeprogram.ru>

Spider and Mouse gallery

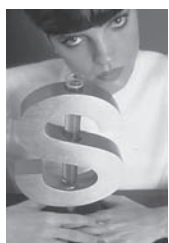
Leningradsky Prospect, 58 (in the yard)
Metro: Aeroport
Telephone: +07 095 287 13 60
e-mail: spmous@hotmail.com

Trash Art

<http://www.da-da-net.ru/TrashArt/bins.asp>

Collective Cultural Action

The Critical Art Ensemble



The totalizing belief that social and aesthetic value are encoded in the being of gifted individuals (rather than emerging from a process of *becoming* shared by group members) is cultivated early in cultural education. If one wants to become an "artist," there is a bounty of educational opportunities—everything from matchbook correspondence schools to elite art academies. Yet there is no place where one can prepare for a collective practice. At best, there are the rare examples where teams (usually partnerships of two) can apply as one for admission into institutions of higher learning. But once in the school, from administration to curriculum, students are forced to accept the ideological imperative that artistic practice is an individual practice.

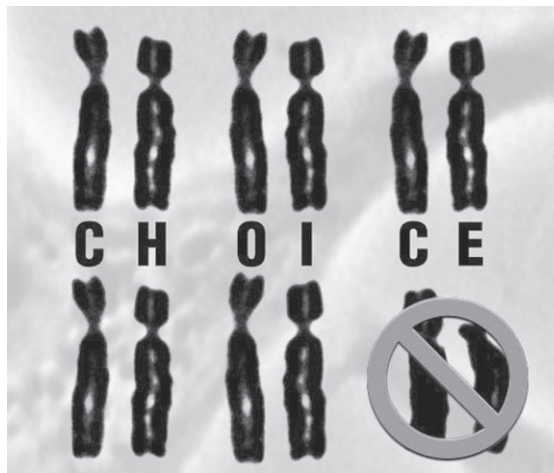
The mechanisms to ensure that this occurs are too many to list here, but consider the spatial model of the art school: classrooms are designed to accommodate aggregates of specialists. Studios are designed to accommodate a single artist, or like the classroom, aggregates of students working individually. Rarely can a classroom be found that has a space designed for face-to-face group interaction. Nor are spaces provided where artists of various media can come together to work on project ideas. Then there is the presentation of faculty (primary role models) as individual practitioners. The institution rewards individual effort at the faculty level in a way similar to how students are rewarded for individual efforts through grades. Woe to the faculty members who go to the tenure review board with only collective efforts to show for themselves. Obviously, these reward systems have their effect on the cultural socialisation process.

On the public front, the situation is no better. If artists want grants for reasons other than being a non-profit presenter/producer, they better be working as individuals. Generally speaking, collective practice has no place in the grant system. Collectives reside in that liminal zone—they are neither an individual, nor an institution, and there are no other categories. Seemingly there is no place to turn. Collectives are not wanted in the public sphere, in the education system, nor in the cultural market (in the limited sense of the term), so why be so much in favour of collective cultural action?

Part of the answer once again has to do with market demands. Market imperatives are double-edged swords. First, the market wants individuals with lots of skills for maximum exploitation. An artist must be able to produce in a given medium, write well enough for publication, be verbally articulate, have a reasonable amount of knowledge of numerous disciplines, be a capable public speaker, a career administrator and possess the proper diplomatic skills to navigate through a variety of cultural sub-populations. Certainly some rare individuals do have all of these skills, but many can only meet these standards by working collectively.

Second is the need for opportunity.

Given the number of trained artists adding to what—within the few platforms for distribution—is already an excessive population of cultural producers, the opportunity for a public voice has rapidly decreased. By specialising in a particular medium, one cuts the opportunities even further. The greater one's breadth of production skills, the more opportunity there is.



Opportunity is also expanded by breadth of knowledge. The more one knows, the more issues one can address. In a time when content has resurfaced as an object of artistic value, a broad interdisciplinary knowledge base is a must. And finally, opportunity can be expanded through the ability to address a wide variety of cultural spaces. The more cultural spaces that a person is comfortable working in, the more opportunity s/he has. If designed with these strategies in mind, collectives can configure themselves to address any issue or space, and they can use all types of media. The result is a practice that defies specialisation and pigeonholing.

Thirdly, the velocity of 'cultural economy' is a factor. The market can consume a product faster than ever before. Just in terms of quantity, collective action offers a tremendous advantage. By working in a group, members are able to resist the Warhol syndrome of factory production with underpaid labourers. Through collective action, product and process integrity can be maintained, while at the same time keeping abreast of market demand.

These considerations may sound cynical, and to a degree they are, but they appear as a reality which must be negotiated if one is to survive as a cultural producer. On the other hand, there is something significant about collective action that is rewarding beyond what can be understood through the utilitarian filters of economic survival.

Size Matters:

Cellular Collective Construction

One problem that seems to plague collective organisation is the group reaching 'critical mass': the point where the group breaks up, and little or nothing can be left of the organisation. The reasons for this vary depending on the function and intention of the group. Our experience has been that with larger artists'/activists' groups, once membership rises into the hundreds, a number of conflicts and contradictions emerge that cause friction. For one thing, tasks become diversified. Not everyone can participate fully in each task, so committees are formed to focus on specific tasks. The group thus moves from a direct process to a representational process. This step toward bureaucracy conjures feelings of separation and mistrust that can be deadly to group action, and that are symptomatic of the failure of overly rationalised democracy. To complicate matters further, different individuals enter the group with differing levels of access to resources. Those with the greatest resources tend to have a larger say in group activities. Consequently, minorities form

that feel under-represented and powerless to compete with majoritarian views and methods. (Too often, these minorities reflect the same minoritarian structure found in culture as a whole). Under such conditions, group splintering (or annihilation) is bound to occur. The worst-case scenario is the formation of a power base that tightens the bureaucratic rigor in order to purge the group of malcontents, and to stifle difference.

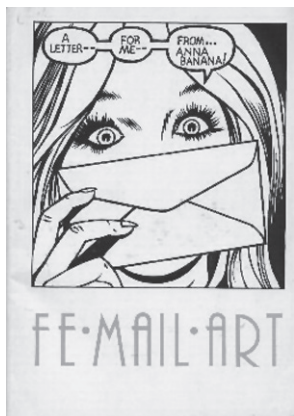
Such problems can also occur at a smaller group level (15 to 50 members). While these smaller groups have an easier time avoiding the alienation that comes from a complex division of labour and impersonal representation, there still can be problems, such as the perception that not everyone has an equal voice in group decisions, or that an individual is becoming the signature voice of the group. Another standard problem is that the level of intimacy necessary to sustain passionately driven group activity rarely emerges in a midsize group. The probability is high that someone, for idiosyncratic reasons, is not going to be able to work with someone else on a long-term basis. These divisions cannot be organised or rationalised away. Much as the large democratic collective is good for short-term, limited issue political and cultural action, the midsize group seems to function best for short-term, specific issue cultural or political projects.

For sustained cultural or political practice free of bureaucracy or other types of separating factors, we recommend a cellular structure. Thus far the artists' cell that typifies contemporary collective activity has formed in a manner similar to band society. Solidarity is based on similarity in terms of skills and political/aesthetic perceptions. Most of the now classic cellular collectives of the 70s and 80s, such as Ant Farm, General Idea, Group Material, Testing the Limits (before it splintered), and Gran Fury used such a method with admirable results. Certainly these collectives' models for group activity are being emulated by a new generation.

While size and similarity through political/aesthetic perspective can replicate itself in the group, members need not share a similarity based on skill. Each member's set of skills can be unique to the cell. Consequently, in terms of production, solidarity is not based on similarity, but on difference. The parts are interrelated and interdependent. Technical expertise is given no chance to collide and conflict, and hence social friction is greatly reduced.

Solidarity through difference also affects the structure of power in the group. Formerly, collective structure tended to be based on the idea that all members were equals at all times. Groups had a fear of hierarchy, because it was considered a categorical evil that led to domination. This notion was coupled with a belief in extreme democracy as the best method of avoiding hierarchy.

While CAE does not follow the democratic model, the collective does recognise its merits; however, we follow Foucault's principle that hierarchical power can be productive (and not necessarily lead to domination), and hence use a floating hierarchy to produce projects. After consensus is reached on how a project should be produced, the member with the greatest expertise in the area has authority over the final product. While all members have a voice in the production process, the project leader makes the final decisions. This keeps endless discussion over who has the better idea or design to a minimum, and



hence the group can produce at a faster rate. Projects tend to vary, so the authority floats among the membership.

At the same time, we would not recommend this process for any social constellation other than the cell (3 to 8 eight people). Members must be able to interact in a direct face-to-face manner, so everyone is sure that they have been heard as a person (and not as an anonymous or marginalised voice). Second, the members must trust one another; that is, sustained collective action requires social intimacy and a belief that the other members have each individual member's interests at heart. A recognition and understanding of the non-rational components of collective action is crucial—without it, the practice cannot sustain itself.

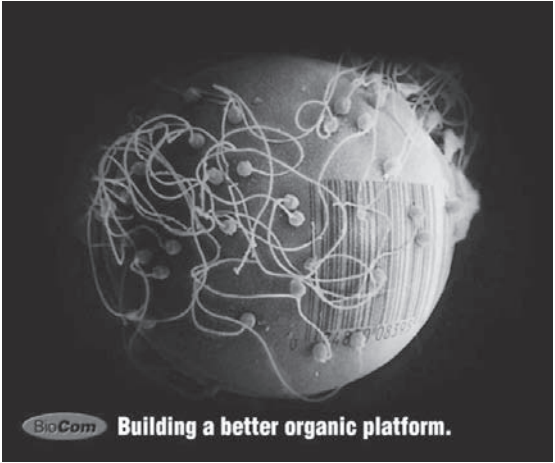
The collective has to consider what is pleasurable for its members. Not all people work at the same rate. The idea that everyone should do an equal amount of work is to measure a member's value by quantity instead of quality. As long as the process is pleasurable and satisfying for everyone, in CAE's opinion, each member should work at the rate at which they are comfortable. Rigid equality in this case can be perverse and destructive and should be avoided. To reinforce the pleasure of the group, convivial relationships beyond the production process are necessary. The primary reason for this need is because the members will intensify bonds of trust and intimacy that will later be positively reflected in the production process. Intimacy produces its own peculiar friction, but the group has a better chance of surviving the arguments and conflicts that arise, as long as in the final analysis each member trusts and can depend on fellow members. Collective action requires total commitment to other members, and this is a frightening thought for many individuals. Certainly, collective practice is not for everyone.

Coalitions, Not Communities

While cellular collective structure is very useful in solving problems of production, long-term personal co-operation, and security (for those involved in underground activities), like all social constellations, it has its limits. It does not solve many of the problems associated with distribution, nor can it fulfil the functions of localised cultural and political organisations. Consequently, there has always been a drive toward finding a social principle that would allow like-minded people or cells to organise into larger groups.

Currently, the dominant principle is 'community.' Without doubt the liberal equivalent of the conservative notion of 'family values'—neither exists in contemporary culture, and both are grounded in political fantasy. For example, the "gay community" is a term often used to refer to all people who are gay within a given territory. Even in a localised context, gay men and women populate all social strata, so it is very hard to believe that this aggregate functions as a community within such a complex society. To complicate matters further, social variables such as race, ethnicity, gender, education, profession, and other points of difference are not likely to be lesser points of identification than the characteristic of being gay. A single shared social characteristic can in no way constitute a community in any sociological sense. Talking about a gay community is as silly as talking about a 'straight community.' The word 'community' is only meaningful in this case as a euphemism for 'minority.' The closest social constellation to a community that does exist are friendship networks, but those too fall short of being communities in any sociological sense.

Who really wants community in the first place, as it contradicts the politics of difference. Solidarity based on similarity through shared ethnicity, and interconnected familial networks supported by a shared sense of place and history,



work against the possibility of power through diversity by maintaining closed social systems. This is not to say that there are no longer relatively closed social sub-systems within society. There are, but they differ from community in that they are products of rationalised social construction and completely lack social solidarity. In order to bring people together from different sub-systems who share a similar concern, hybrid groups have to be intentionally formed. These groups are made up of people who are focusing their attention on one or two characteristics that they share in common, and who put potentially conflicting differences aside. This kind of alliance, created for purposes of large-scale cultural production and/or for the visible consolidation of economic and political power, is known as a coalition.

CAE has supported a number of coalitions in the past, including various ACT UP chapters and PONY (Prostitutes of New York), and has organised temporary localised ones as well. One of the problems we had with such alliances was in negotiating service to the coalition while maintaining its collective practice. Coalitions often consume as much energy as a person is willing to put into them; hence membership burnout is quite common. After a few years of this variety of activism, members were ready to retreat back into less visible cellular practice. CAE began looking for a model of coalition different from the single issue model.

One potential answer has come by way of our affiliation with Nettime, a loosely knit coalition of activists, artists, theorists, techies, collectives, and organisations from Europe and North America that have come together for reasons of generalised support for radical cultural and political causes*. It has approximately 700 members, and has existed for about six years. Nettime functions as an information, distribution, and recruitment resource for its members. The core of its existence is virtual: member contact is maintained through an online list, various newsgroups, and an archive. In addition, the coalition holds occasional conferences (the first two, Metaforum I and II, were held in Budapest in 1995 and 1996; Beauty and the East was held in Ljubljana in 1997), produces and contributes to cultural projects (such as Hybrid Workspace at Documenta X), acts as a resource for various political actions, and produces books from its archive (such as README: ASCII Culture and the Revenge of Knowledge).

From CAE's perspective, one of the elements that makes Nettime a more pleasurable experience is that unlike most coalitions, it is anarchistic rather than democratic. Nettime has no voting procedures, committee work, coalition officers, nor any of the markers of governance through representation. Hierarchy emerges in accordance with who is willing to do the work. Those who are willing to run the list have the most say over its construction. At the same time, the general policy for coalition maintenance is "tools not rules." Those building the virtual architecture govern by providing space for discussions that are not of general interest to the entire list. They also direct the flow of information traffic. Whatever members want to do—there is a place to do it. For events in real space, the primary rule of "those who do the work have the biggest say" still applies. Indeed, there is considerable room for exploitation in such a system, yet this does not occur with much frequency because members have sufficient trust in and allegiance to other

members; the coalition as a whole won't tolerate system abuse (such as spamming, or self-aggrandising use of the list); and there is a self-destruct fail-safe—members would jump ship at the first sign of ownership and/or permanent hierarchy.

Perhaps the real indicator of the congeniality shared by Nettime members is its cultural economy: it functions as an information gift economy. Articles and information are distributed free of charge to members by those who have accumulated large information assets. Nettimers often see significant works on the intersections of art, politics, and technology long before these works appear in the publications based on money economy. For real space projects, this same sense of voluntarism pervades all activities. What is different here from other cultural economies is that gift economy is only demanding on those who have too much. No one is expected to volunteer until they suffer or burn out. The volunteers emerge from among those who have excessive time, labour power, funding, space, or some combination thereof, and need to burn it off to return to equilibrium. Consequently, activity waxes and wanes depending on the situations and motivations of the members.

Problems certainly occur. However, Nettime is still the most congenial large-scale collective environment in which CAE has ever worked. The reason is that this loose coalition began with the romantic principle of accepting non-rational characteristics. It believed that a large collective could exist based on principles of trust, altruism, and pleasure; rather than on the Hobbesian assumption of the war of all against all, or an overvaluation of the organisational principles of accountability and categorical equality. Nettime functions using just one fail-safe system—self-destruction—it skips all the alienating bureaucracy necessary for managing endless accountability procedures. If Nettime self-destructs, all members will walk away whole, and will look for new opportunities for collective action. An alliance with the temporary is one of Nettime's greatest strengths.

Final Thought

Although they are in a secondary position in terms of cultural organisational possibilities, cells and coalitions still present a viable alternative to individual cultural practices. Collective action solves some of the problems of navigating market-driven cultural economy by allowing the individual to escape the skewed power relationships between the individual and the institution. More significantly, however, collective action also helps alleviate the intensity of alienation born of an overly rationalised culture by recreating some of the positive points of friendship networks within a productive environment. For this reason artists' research into alternative forms of social organisation is just as important as the traditional research into materials, processes, and products.

*The description of the Nettime coalition given in this essay is solely from CAE's perspective. It was not collectively written nor approved by the Nettime membership.

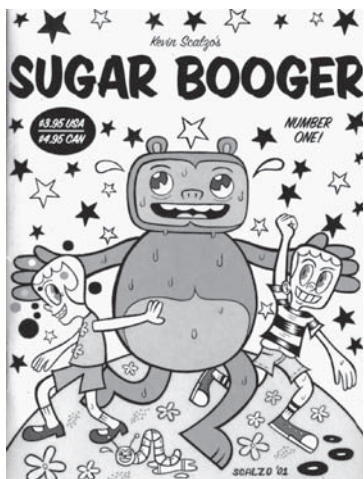
Critical Art Ensemble (C.A.E.) is a collective of six artists of different specializations committed to the production of a new genre art that explores the intersections among critical theory, art and technology.

<http://critical-art.net/>



Zine & Comics review

Mark Pawson



Apologies for the absence of this column in the last issue, I was busy doing some wallpapering and went to Japan in search of strange print creations, there's a bumper crop of reading material in this issue, hopefully it was worth the wait....

Writing a book about all the previous books you've written, designed and published sounds like an ultimate conceit but Leonard Koren's **13 Books** (notes on the design, construction & marketing of my last...) is a satisfying, successful book in it's own right and manages to avoid

the depths of self-indulgence. Koren's earlier books published over the last 25 years were about

baths & bathing and Japanese fashion, business and aesthetics, each book in turn is examined anecdotally in terms of: subject matter, inspiration, organising principle, greatest difficulty, degree of success and enduring lesson, the scheme is completed with Gary Panter's hand drawn illustrations of the original books, showing the cover and details from each book, (apart from one book cover which was enforced on Koren by a publisher, and which he refuses to include in his own book!) **13 Books** should be of interest to anyone involved in making

books, whether or not they are familiar with Koren's previous books. As a bookmaker, seller, collector and reviewer, admittedly I'm predisposed to this type of book, I might even revive 'Mark's Little Book about Mark's Books' which I started in 1989 and never quite got round to finishing. File next to Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers, 283 Useful Ideas from Japan and Success Stories—How eleven of Japan's most interesting businesses came to be, all by Leonard Koren.

It's a book full of dots. **Dot...age** by Yasushi Cho. is a delectable full colour handsewn book of dots, not just any dots, but those

lines of full stops..... found on the contents pages of books..... in telephone directories and on order forms..... lines of dots to impose order on empty space and inform the eye where to look next. Is there a proper name for these incidental dots known only to typographers and dot-spot-ers? **Dot...age** displays a purity of conception which is reminiscent of early Concrete Poetry. File inside Found Poems, Bern Porter, Something Else Press 1972.

No payment will be made until balance equals \$50.00, a small artists book by Jack Grahl is a collection of record company royalty statements which inform the recipient; 'We're not going to pay you the

money we owe you until we owe you a bit more!' A decidedly non-glamorous look at the entertainment industry/music business. Is Jack Grahl an artist or accountant? File next to your overdraft statements and bounced cheques.

Mascara was Peter Kohler's dinky little handmade publication that I imagine he carried all the copies round in his pocket for a couple of weeks before he could bear to part with them. His latest book came as a surprise, **Open** is a thick 100 page slab of a book, which I've been working my way through deliberately slowly, savouring each page of his multiple unlikely comic strips, First Ladies vs. the Ghost of Papa Doc Duvalier, Vicious Shrimp Man, Old Mad Witch, Mortal Man, Screaming Ball and the Floating Skull, The Gnome and the Antidepressants and The Laughing Fruits. File next to Al Ackerman's 'Let Me Eat Massive Pieces of Clay'

HAW! Horrible, horrible cartoons by Ivan Brunetti. A collection of morally reprehensible, heads down, no nonsense, mindless yucko-depravo cartoons by Ivan Brunetti. Is this scathing social critique, or is he just a complete Sick Fuck? I dunno and after reading it several times I'm ashamed to even get half the references in there, its the kind of book you would hope they had difficulty finding a printer to accept! There's not a single cartoon in here I could get away with describing, well perhaps the one with cute kids hustling heroin to a recently landed space alien, or maybe the one of grandpa and grandma in the computer showroom 'Yeah, yeah, yeah... Skip the mumbo-jumbo son... Just show us how to get pornography on this fuckin' thing.' But the one with an earnest looking couple at the dinner table with the woman wondering out loud 'Is sperm Vegan?' is clearly going too far, and we've not even started on sex, death, drugs and mutilation in imaginative combinations. **HAW!** is probably not available in your local comic shop. File in the Toilet or next to your collection of those naughty eros comics.

SUGAR BOOGER, Kevin Scalzo, is a beautiful pocket sized candy-coloured comic featuring Sugar Booger, a big happy bear, who likes nothing better than playing with kids in the park, unfortunately all the children he meets have been indoctrinated not to talk to strangers and freak out when he tries to make friends with them. Sugar Booger wins them over by swallowing an enormous sack full of candy and using his unique talent to produce copious amounts of sweet snot! **SUGAR BOOGER**—a versatile plaything that kids can play with, make models out of, bounce around on and even eat! Beautiful and bonkers. File next to Archer Prewitt's Sof'Boy.

I've reviewed **World War 3 Illustrated** before so they wouldn't normally get another mention, but **World War 3 Illustrated** #32, their response to 11/9/2001/NYC is an extremely powerful and moving issue. Reviewing it seems superfluous, so here's the editor's introduction in full:

"We published the first issue of **World War 3 Illustrated** in 1980. It contained images of New York City in ruins. Nuclear war seemed imminent. As conditions got worse under Reagan, war became a metaphor for our daily lives. Today in 2002 we are experiencing real war on our doorstep here in Manhattan. We see war and the city with new eyes. This 32nd issue of **World War 3 Illustrated** contains the diverse reactions of New York artists, writers and cartoonists to the disaster. This issue grows out of our personal experience. From seeing, hearing, smelling and living with this insane event. We are not trying to prove a point. We are asking questions. Trying to make sense out of the incomprehensible. Looking for our Humanity in the rubble."

File next to a couple of other copies of this issue which you'll be lending to friends.

A couple of year ago I used to flick through **While you were sleeping** and put it swiftly back in Tower Records magazine racks when I came to the pages of spray painted subway trains. Recent issues are much improved, it's put together by a bunch of twenty-nothing, never-grow-up guys from Maryland, who have mucho fun picking feuds with the Spam Museum, interviewing hookers (most issues) and interviewing whichever member of the Wu Tang Clan comes to hand (most issues). Basic interview technique—ask the most stoopid questions you can get away with. There's a great 5-finger-discount shoplifting fashion feature, cacophony society style pranks and Jello reminiscing about Joey (Biafra/Ramone). There's still a few vandalised trains in there but thankfully outweighed by more interesting post-graf/billboard modification work from the likes of Twist, Reas, Espo, Margaret Kilgallen and Shawn Wolfe plus some notable recent cover artwork from Mitch O'Connell and John "Garbage Pail Kids" Pound. File where your mum won't find it.

"I love the smell of vandalism early in the morning" declares UK graffiti artist Banksy. **Banging your head against a brick wall** is a collection of recent work which he's generously stencilled on walls across London—doing his own bit for the abolition of gallery admission fees. These no frills black & white spraypainted works are deceptively simple, juxtaposing familiar images; schoolgirls hugging bombs, surveillance cameras peeping out of dustbins and Mona Lisa with a rocket launcher. Banksy's virtuoso piece is a 'designated graffiti area' stencil for use on pristine white walls, illustrated with photos of graffiti encrusted walls a few days after being 'officially designated'.

Banging your head against a brick wall is splattered with useful how-to hints, Banksy's paranoid method rants and his *it's-only-art-if-you-can-get-arrested-for-doing-it* mantra. There's no vandalised trains in here and no Krylon spraypaint fetishisation either—'Cheap British paint is fine'. Word on the street is that the police have collected an impressive portfolio of Banksy's work and would very much like to see him put somewhere there's lots of walls and no spraypaint, so it looks like Banksy may be taking an early voluntary retirement.

PUNK PLANET #46 is a great find, this issue is an Art & Design special issue covering a broad spectrum of artists whose work is informed and inspired by their interpretations of the punk/do-it-yourself ethos. **PUNK PLANET #46** features a range of artists from the internationally known: Jamie Hernandez of Love & Rockets comics, the recently resurfaced Gee Vaucher who did all the CRASS Artwork and Shepard Fairey of GIANT/Andre the Giant notoriety to smaller local initiatives & projects; SF's Pond Gallery, Chicago Barrio Murals and the Mobilivre Bookmobile taking in along the way a host of indy cartoonists and unclassifiable individuals such as Elliot Earls—typographer/musician. I'm not sure if having four different 'limited edition' covers is very PUNK, but then I never felt the need to buy Generation X's King Rocker 7" in all four different colours of vinyl either, so what do I know?

Unsurprisingly I found some great books in Japan, perfect eye candy for image junkies, never mind the language barrier! Travel about **KAOHAME: 88 best shots** by Ijichi Hiroyuki, is a photographic collection of painted wooden figures with holes for faces—for you to stand behind and have your photo taken. The Japanese are photo-crazy, snap-



ping each other wherever they go and these Kaohame sited in tourist locations and vacation spots provide yet another photo opportunity. Hiroyuki has travelled across Japan photographing Kaohame which come in a variety of shapes; historical/folklore characters, fish, movie stars, statues, and monster sized ice-cream cones! Each Kaohame is given a star rating and accompanied with a small hand-drawn map of its location (essential to find anything in Japan) together with train information and admission charges. It would have been a nice touch to have included a few shots of the Kaohame actually being used by sightseers and tourists.

DAGASHI is 120 pages crammed full with colour photos of cheap sweets, chocolates and candy costing ¥20-30 (12-18p) and cheap pocket money toys (¥50-100 / 30-60p)! There's a multitude of strange sweets in eye-catching packages, ramshackle old lady sweet shops, traditional Japanese sweet makers, sweet crispy tonkatsu pork fillets, candy chopsticks, lucky lottery sweets, rice snacks galore, street fair foods, snack noodles packaged as cigarettes and things you can only guess at. Imagine the research for this book, it would be like giving a couple of pesky seven year olds £100 and saying now off you go and buy as many different sweets and toys as you can, don't spend more than 50p on any item and don't come back till you've spent all the money! Watch out for Pick'n'Mix Challenge on some dodgy digital channel soon... I don't even want to know why this book was put together or what the text says, I'm just happy to know it exists. File next to Sugar Booger and a box of cheap sweets and penny chews big enough to make you sick if you ate them all at once.

In The Mambonsai 2 Paradise Yamamoto combines Bonsai, traditional Japanese ornamental shrubs with plastic railway model figures into a series of precisely arranged tableaux. Look closely amongst the shrubbery and moss in **The Mambonsai 2** and you'll notice the little people, they're not pixies or elves, but grumpy old

men, reluctant hikers, skinny-dippers and skiving workmen. Yamamoto creates beauty spots crawling with photographers and a forest which is a popular site for committing suicide. The book is supplemented with beautiful diagrams, a size chart comparing Mambonsai with the Tokyo tower and Mt Everest and there's even a Mambonsai theme song. Thankfully **The Mambonsai 2** is bilingual, with good translations, although later on in the book Yamamoto warns us "In case you know little about Japanese culture, please consult a professional before trying to decipher this high-level, intellectual and sophisticated chart." A truly unique and loopy, book. File next to Kenji Kawakami's 101

Useless Japanese Inventions.

Ultraman is the enormously popular rubbersuited Japanese superhero who has been battling goofy space monsters for the last 30 years. In **Daddy is Ultraman**, a beautiful children's book by Tatsuya Miyanishi we see the domestic side of his life, at home with his son and wife, ultramam. When Ultraman comes home after a hard day fighting evil monsters in a devastated city and sees the wreckage of his son's toy-strewn room he loses his composure and shouts at his son. Later on he apologises by making paper masks of his many adversaries for his son to play with. Its all drawn in a loose Keith Haring-esque style, with painstakingly handmade colour mis-separations. I hope the idea of **Daddy is Ultraman**-type books doesn't catch on over here, can you imagine the horrors of 'Daddy is a Tellytubby'—unless Ivan Brunetti wrote and drew it? File in your kids room, or for when you decide to learn Japanese.

Japanese books are unsurprisingly near-impossible to get hold of outside of Japan, next time you're in Tokyo (?) check out PROGETTO, ON SUNDAYS, NADIFF, GALLERY 360 and Village Vanguard.

Closer to home is London's new **Bookartbookshop** specialising in artists books and small press publications. Bookartbookshop only opened in February 2002 and has already built up an impressive stock, successfully filling a gap in London's bookshops and providing a much needed specialist venue for artists books and small press publications. They deserve your support, and did I mention that they sell my books?

13 Books, Leonard Koren, \$17.95. leonardkoren.com

Dot...age, by Yasushi Cho, ¥780, cho@helen.ocn.ne.jp www5.ocn.ne.jp/~laughter

no payment will be made until balance equals \$50.00 Jack Grahl, 21 Hampton Rd, Forest Gate, London E7 OPD

Open, Peter Kohler, biondibooks@swipnet.se

HAW! Horrible, horrible cartoons by Ivan Brunetti. \$8.95 Fantagraphics

SUGAR BOOGER, Kevin Scalzo, \$3.95. www.kevinscalzo.com

World War 3 Illustrated, \$3.50+p&p, World War 3, POBox 20777, Tompkins Square Sta., NY, NY 10009 USA

while you were sleeping \$4.98 www.whileyouweresleeping.com

Banging your head against a brick wall, Banksy, £4, www.akuk. www.banksy.co.uk

PUNK PLANET, \$9.00 inc p+p. www.punkplanet.com

Travel about KAOHAME: 88 best shots. Ijichi Hiroyuki

DAGASHI, Shinchosha ¥1600

The MAMBONSAI 2, Paradise Yamamoto, ¥1700, www.mambonsai.com

DADDY IS ULTRAMAN, (and 6 more books in the series) Tatsuya Miyanishi ¥1170

PROGETTO, 5-5 Maruyamacho, Shibuya, Tokyo www.progetto.co.jp

ON SUNDAYS, 3-7-6 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo. www.watarium.co.jp

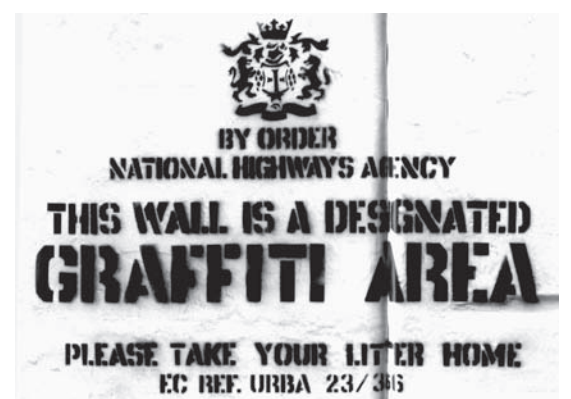
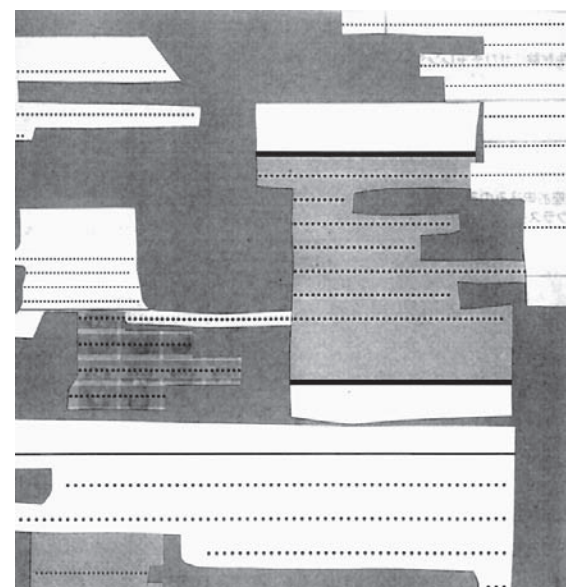
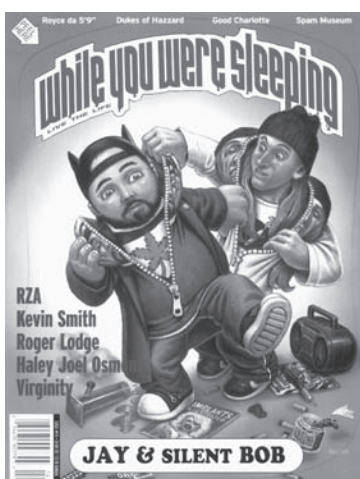
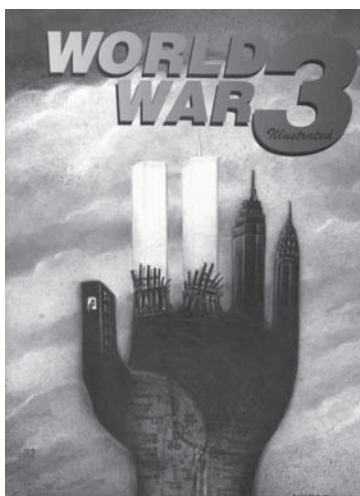
NADIFF, in Aoyama. www.nadiff.com

GALLERY 360 in Omotesando

Village Vanguard in Shimo-Kitazawa

Bookartbookshop, 17 Pitfield St, London N1 6HB, Wed-Sat 1-7pm, 020 7608

1333 www.bookartbookshop.com



The March

The story of the historic Scottish hunger march

Harry McShane

Introduction

Originally published in 1933 by the National Unemployed Workers Movement (NUWM) this story relates events seventy years ago. Massive numbers of people were out of work in those days, with the attendant poverty and misery.

Readers of Three Days That Shook Edinburgh will themselves feel angry that so little has been done by the labour movement to organise and fight back against the ravages of unemployment in the present situation. The daily growing number of unemployed are not involved in organising contemporary protest marches to any great degree, and compared to the efforts, the imagination and the organisation of the NUWM in the thirties they are puny affairs.

In a situation where more than ten people are chasing every vacancy; where more than a million workers have been unemployed for more than a year; when the majority of school leavers can't find a job, and in many cases are not entitled to any benefits; and finally, when most men and women over fifty can be taken off the unemployment register to reduce the total, and they realise that they may never work again - has the time not come when we must raise the fundamental question of the very existence of the capitalist system?

Long before labour leaders became respectable, they discussed and organised on street corners and, as this pamphlet shows, fought for decent living conditions in the midst of mass unemployment. The pioneers of the working class unions did have a dream - it was called Socialism. In a world where what is on offer is only booms and slumps with the occasional war thrown in, there must be a better way.

In 1983, when he was ninety years old, Harry McShane was interviewed by the magazine Socialist Review, and had this to say:

"Last night on television Michael Foot was talking about unemployment, that it would be with us for a long time to come. For the first time he was admitting that unemployment is a permanent feature under capitalism. He had no solution to offer, and he said "we can't raise people's hopes". We have to make propaganda and say clearly there can be no solution to the problem of unemployment under capitalism. We have to argue that alongside the fight to improve the conditions of the unemployed we must fight all the time to change the system. That is the only solution..."

Les Foster

On Friday, 9th June 1938, along the main roads leading to Edinburgh, columns of men were marching; men with bands, banners, slogans, everyone equipped with knapsack and blanket, their field cookers on ahead: an army in miniature, an unemployed army, the Hunger Marchers.

In the ranks were men of all political opinions—Labour men, Communists, ILP; there were Trade Unionists and non-Unionists; there were even sections of women marchers—all marching four abreast, shoulder to shoulder, keeping step, surging along rhythmically.

Here was the United Front of the workers, one of the first fronts of the drive for Unity now being made in all parts of Britain.

Youth

An outstanding feature of the March was the predominant part played in it by the young workers. At least 50 per cent of the Marchers could be classified as young workers. Their discipline, courage and determination were of the very highest order and showed how the Youth can assist to a tremendous degree the fight of the Unemployed.

This March, with its strong Youth representation, is a living refutation of the pessimists who assert that the young workers are not interested in the struggle. It drives home the necessity of the most careful and extensive preparations being made so that in every area and locality the young workers will be drawn into the general mass activity. It reinforces a thousand times the urgent necessity of building strong Youth sections of the Unemployed Movement.

Why They Marched

The marchers were going to Edinburgh, endeavouring to secure an interview with Sir G Collins, Secretary of State for Scotland. They proposed to lay before him the steadily worsening conditions of the unemployed masses of Scotland, to demand increased relief for semi-starving men, women and children, and to put certain carefully thought out proposals for work schemes which would help to give employment to tens of thousands of the unemployed army; to demand the ending of the embargo on Russian goods which was preventing employment for 60,000 Engineering workers (including many in Scotland) because of stoppage of Soviet orders. They marched for work, for bread, and for maintenance of all unemployed.

The marching unemployed were the delegates, the representatives of their four hundred thousand unemployed comrades at home. Every trade, every industry, was present. The workers of Scotland stood behind the Marchers, stood behind their demands for work and maintenance, stood behind their Hunger "Trek to Edinburgh.

Our Demands

- (1) Abolition of the Means Test.
- (2) That children of unemployed be granted 1s 6d per week extra, and that adult unemployed and adult dependants be granted 3s per week extra. These increases to apply to all unemployed whether in receipt of statutory or transitional payments or in receipt of Public Assistance.
- (3) That rents be reduced 25 per cent.
- (4) That the Social Service Schemes and all voluntary labour connected with the same be repudiated. In addition, the lifting of the Embargo on the Soviet Union and conclusion of a new Trade Agreement.



The Hunger March of June 1933, was a coping stone to a whole series of mass activities which had swept Scotland. In Glasgow, in Renfrewshire, in Fife, in Lanarkshire, Dumbartonshire, even in far north Aberdeen and Fraserburgh, the mass movement of the unemployed had developed. Despite sneers, insults, batonings, jailings, the agitation had developed, thousands of meetings held, incessant delegations and deputising, huge popular petitions containing the demands of the unemployed organised, mass demonstrations held. Clashes with the police were frequent (in Glasgow, due to plain clothes policemen provocation, a fierce fight took place on Glasgow Green and fourteen policemen were injured). A tremendous petition, containing the signatures of over 112,000 people was organised, a concession of 1s 6d per child literally torn out of the Glasgow PAC¹ by mass pressure—only to have the National Government² step in, in order to prevent a workers' victory in Glasgow.

In Fife, in Dumbartonshire, even in Ayrshire, the workers forced concessions.

County Hunger Marches in Fife, Ayrshire, Lanarkshire, were organised. They were very successful. More and more workers were being brought into the struggle; hope was being given to the faint-hearted and the lukewarm. The struggle against the means Test, the Dole Cuts, the Anomalies Act was intensifying. The stage was set for an all-Scottish Hunger March to raise the fight to a still greater height. The famous Hunger March in June was the result.

Not an isolated event, not a stunt, but the logical development, the coping stone, of the mass local activities throughout the winter and spring.

The preparations for the March were more thorough and wide-spread than anything hitherto. Not simply to organise contingents of marchers, but to organise a mass working-class support for the March contingents, to bring factory workers, Trade Union branches, Co-operatives, Trades Councils into the March, to get active support in popularising the Demands.

Hunger Marchers' Councils were organised in the areas composed of delegates from as many working-class organisations as possible; hundreds of March Recruiting Meetings were held; Trade Union Branches circularised, and in some cases visited; public correspondence initiated with Sir Godfrey Collins and with Town Councils and Trades Councils on the main routes to Edinburgh; resolutions passed from a very large number of Trade Union branches and from meetings, demanding that Collins be present; Town Councils and Councillors deputised; a regular series of propagandist and agitational activities which had a tremendous result in focusing attention on the March and in breaking down the former isolation of the unemployed from the employed and trade union workers.

All this time the recruiting for the March contingents was going on, the Field Kitchens were prepared, money and foodstuffs collected—a significant feature, indicating the progress made in breaking down isolation, was the very fine response from Trade Union branches and Co-operatives in sending donations and passing resolutions demanding that Collins come to Edinburgh. The Recruiting Form, as follows, enabled the best type of Marchers to be recruited, and prevented our enemies saying that anyone was misled.

SCOTTISH HUNGER MARCH

Declaration Form

May, 1933.

I

Name

Address

promise that while on the March I will observe strict discipline, as I realise that unless discipline is observed the greatest dangers will arise for the marchers.

I also undertake to stay in Edinburgh until the main body of marchers leave. I have been informed that there are no guarantees about returning on any particular day. I come on the march with that understanding, and will observe the agreement.

I understand the significance of this march and fully support the demands to the Government.

Signed.....

NOTE— No one can be allowed on the march who has not filled in this form.

The concentration against the march

Never at any time has there been such concentration against any March as against this. Capitalist Town councils, Labour leaders, Trades Union bureaucrats, with the Press, Police and Sir Godfrey Collins joining in, all united in an unholy alliance denouncing the March, refusing any assistance, trying to intimidate the workers with their refusal to grant either recognition, food or accommodation. All along the routes, at the suggested stopping places—Kilsyth, Bo'ness, Airdrie, etc.—there was an obstinate refusal to grant accommodation for the Marchers, a concentrated campaign of opposition and vilification on the part of the capitalists, the Labour and Trade Union leaders.

The situation was sharpening, the sides were becoming clearer defined. On the one hand the Unemployed Workers united with the Trade Union branches and Co-operative Guilds and factory workers organising the March; on the other the capitalist Press and Police, plus the capitalist councillors and Labour and Trade Union leaders mobilising and uniting to prevent and destroy the March.

The March Begins

Word came through on 6th June that Aberdeen and Dundee contingents had set out to link up with Fife in Kirkcaldy. The March was on! The Ayrshire contingent linked up with Lanarkshire and marched via Shotts and East Calder.

Renfrewshire and Dumbartonshire came to Glasgow and set out via Coatbridge, Airdrie, Bathgate, and Broxburn; with them marched a women's section.

The Glasgow men set out via Kilsyth and Falkirk, where they were joined by Stirlingshire, on to Bo'ness and Corstorphine.

By Friday afternoon all the contingents were under way. Along the four main highroads to Edinburgh trumped steadily the Hunger Marchers, bands playing, flags flying, cheery and



determined. Not a single contingent had accommodation guaranteed, not a single contingent entertained the slightest doubt that it would be secured. They knew that the pressure of the masses was something that no Town Council nor bureaucratic Provost could long stand against.

In Glasgow there was a tremendous send-off; thousands of people gathered at George Square; and as the March started—headed by Comrades McGovern; Heenan of the ILP; Aitken Ferguson, Communist Party; Henderson, Glasgow Organiser of the NUWM; and Harry McShane, Scottish Organiser of the NUWM and the March—there was a great send-off. All the road out to Bishopbriggs a huge demonstration accompanied the Marchers, then lined the roadside, and cheered the March contingent as it set off on its first lap (Kilsyth).

The first barrier surmounted

In this town the Provost and the Labour Town Council had refused any assistance whatever. "No use the Marchers coming here"; Notting could be done"; "Nobody wanted them"; etc. But what a reception at Kilsyth! The entire town, almost without exception, turned out to greet the Marchers. the Town Council meeting scheduled for that night was hastily abandoned, and the Councillors and Provost disappeared. Quarters were found for the men in the Salvation Army headquarters; a gigantic meeting was held in the Park by comrades McGovern, Heenan, McShane, Ferguson; a unanimous vote of support for the Marchers was given.

The townspeople were ours—no doubt, hesitation or dubiety about where they stood in relation to the March. They, like the overwhelming mass of the workers everywhere the March touched, solidly supported the Hunger Marchers.

This story of Kilsyth is the experience of every contingent—barriers erected by the enemies, crumbling before the surge of working-class mass pressure aroused by the very appearance of the Marchers.

All along the route, in every town and village, in almost every cottage the workers came out to welcome the marching unemployed. Coppers, which could ill be spared, clinked into the boxes; women with tears in their eyes, wishing the men "good luck" and dropping their contributions into the collecting tins.

No hair-splitting arguments among the masses, no asking themselves whether the Right Honourable Ceo. Lansbury MP³ had given the March his pontifical blessing or not, no question



as to whether Mr Citrine⁴ or the TUC endorsed or did not endorse the March.

No! The workers realised instinctively that this was their own people who were marching, their own class, kith and kin; it was "their side", and anybody who opposed it was on the other side.

The class character of the March broke through all the flimsy arguments of the Labour and Trade Union leaders and showed, as in a lightning flash, where they stood—on the other side of the barricade.

In this pamphlet there is not one-tenth of the space required to tell of one-half of the episodes of this memorable March, of the heroism and determination that kept men plugging on with feet torn, blistered, bloody, even when their comrades and leaders wanted them to take a bus into Corstorphine; of comrade Heenan, whose feet were in a terrible condition and who wrenched his ankle six miles from Corstorphine, but who obstinately refused even to consider giving up, and kept tramping doggedly on. How can one tell of the humour, the healthy, salty humour, that refused even to consider downheartedness even when tramping along at the end of a twenty-mile march through two hours of pelting rain? How can one write of the discipline, the comradeship, the glowing loyalty of the marchers, that would have inspired a dead man!

Into Edinburgh

At 4pm, Sunday, 11th June, all the contingents reached the Central Meeting Place at Corstorphine. What a sight it was as each contingent marched in; what a cheer they got from the rest!

An especial welcome was given to the women marchers, whose spirit and determination were marvellous.

The staff work at Corstorphine was splendid. Everything worked on ball bearings. The Marchers' own Field Kitchens were in full blast, and in an incredibly short time the whole army was fed.

The whistle goes —Pheep-eep; the contingents form up; then, headed by their bands, off they go into Edinburgh—one thousand strong—in military formation and discipline.

The Edinburgh workers sent out a strong contingent to meet us and march in with us. The streets were lined all the way into Edinburgh with sympathetic workers, tremendous enthusiasm prevailing.

The result was that, seeing what was happening, the Authorities decided on a cautious policy.

We knew beforehand that we could be allowed peacefully to enter Edinburgh. Before the Glasgow contingent left, letters were sent to Sir Godfrey Collins, the Ministry of Labour, the Department of Health and the Education Department, asking them to hear a deputation on Monday 12th June. Three telegrams were received on the road—one from each Department—offering to meet a deputation on Monday at 11am at the Ministry of Labour Office, 44 Drumsheugh Gardens. We had no reply from Sir Godfrey Collins. These telegrams were the first recognition of the March; it was a break through.

The marchers in Edinburgh

The marchers had now arrived at their destination, despite opposition and rumours to the effect that the March would be called off we marched to the Mound, where the formation was still maintained. About 20,000 people had assembled here. So dense was the crowd that many could not hear the speeches which were delivered. Councillor Paton gave a speech of welcome, which was replied to by McGovern, Heenan, Ferguson and McShane. The Marchers then went to the ILP Hall at Bonnington Road, where a meal was provided by the Edinburgh Reception Committee.

The first concession by the Authorities in Edinburgh was when the police agreed to lift the ban on collections in the streets, after the Marchers had declared their intention of collecting from everyone who was prepared to assist the March.

While feeding was going on, a deputation approached the police on the question of accommodation. They came back with a report to the effect that we could have Waverley Market. The deputation had raised the question of blankets or boards being put on the stone floor. This request was refused, and the deputation turned down the offer of the Waverley Market.

The struggle had now begun! The Marchers were lined up and marched off. In reply to enquiries as to where they were going, it was stated that they were going to the police station. The suggestion was then made that we should sleep on Leith Links. We said we would sleep where we could be seen.

When the Marchers reached the Post Office, instead of going to the Police Station, they turned along Princess Street, picked a place past the Mound, took off their kits and sat down! Within a few minutes news came along that McGovern and McShane were wanted by two men in a car. Word was sent back, "We are too tired, let them come here". They came along and told us they had secured the Oddfellows Hall, which we decided to accept.

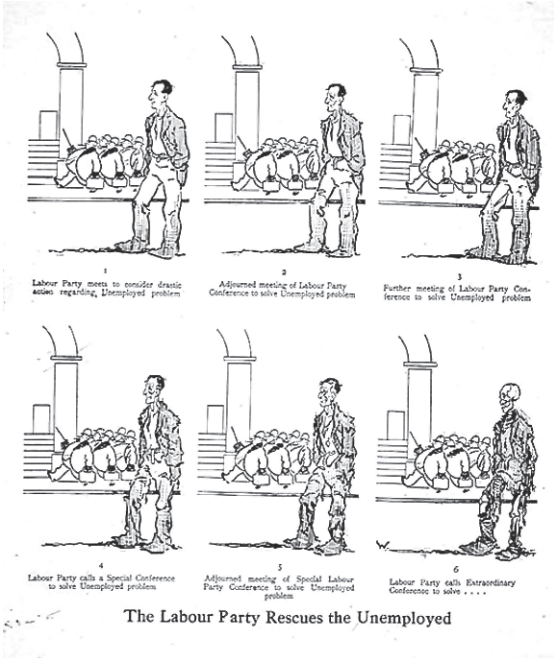
When, however, the hall was filled up, there was still a considerable number without accommodation. In order to find accommodation the Assistant Chief Constable and Aitken Ferguson went to the Melbourne Hall which is owned by the Scottish Socialist Party. The Assistant Chief Constable appealed for the hall on the grounds of humanity, and offered to pay for it, but was met with a point blank refusal. The Marchers that were left ultimately slept in the police muster rooms. It was two o'clock in the morning before all the Marchers were sheltered.

The marchers go to the Scottish Office

On Monday after breakfast (which we had at Bonnington Road) we marched to Drumsheugh Gardens where our deputation was to be heard. The Marchers sat outside while the deputation was being heard. The deputation was inside the building for two hours. It was composed of Comrades McGovern, Ross of Lanarkshire, McPherson of Fife, Harley of Greenock, Kelly of the NUR, and McShane. The deputation protested at the absence of Sir Godfrey Collins; and after much discussion, persuaded the officials to telephone through to Collins in London. He persisted in his refusal to meet the Marchers. The deputation expressed its willingness to wait in Edinburgh until he came. In the absence of Collins, the deputation proceeded to put the Marchers' demands before the permanent officials present.

The deputation

The deputation demanded the abolition of the Anomalies Act and the Means Test. They stressed the fact that women should not be compelled to go into domestic service, and that there should be an end to voluntary labour under the Social Service Schemes which, they said, was getting people to do work for nothing and the thin end of the wedge for the introduction of compulsory labour in return for Unemployment Benefit. They asked for extensive work schemes such as the construction of the Forth Road bridge and a new arterial road through Glasgow to be put in hand: all work to be paid at trade-union rates of wages and conditions. So far as the Department of Health was concerned, the deputation asked for an extension of benefits under the National Health Insurance scheme, and pressed for the



removal of anomalies in the scales of relief paid in various localities. A protest was made against the interference of the Ministry of Health last December when Glasgow Public Assistance Committee recommended an increase for children of unemployed during Christmas and New Year weeks.

In regard to education, the deputation asked for more schools and a supply of better boots and books for the children of the unemployed.

They raised the question of the treatment of the Hamilton "squatters" and stated that they should be properly housed by this time.

They also protested against the embargo on Soviet Russia, which is aggravating the unemployment problem in this country.

The deputation was told that their representations were noted and would be sent to the proper quarter. This was described by the deputation as very unsatisfactory. After further discussion, the deputation rejoined the Marchers outside.

In Parliament Square

In the meantime, while we were engaged in these activities, the cooks (in accordance with a pre-arranged plan) had removed the cooking utensils to Parliament Square. Just before two o'clock a large lorry arrived on the scene, laden with camp kitchens, dixies and canteens, large supplies of pies and other foods and trestles and boards.

The three camp-kitchens were soon belching forth large clouds of smoke. Gallons and gallons of tea were made, while boxes containing a large amount of food were unloaded. Some six or eight women assisted the Marchers' own cooks in preparing and serving the food.

The unusual sight in this historical Square attracted large crowds of passers-by, and they seemed inclined to linger to watch the proceedings; but a large body of police arrived on the scene and kept them in motion.

A striking scene

"A remarkable scene was presented when the Marchers encamped in the square in orderly lines. Within a few minutes, with packs off, they lined up in long queues at



the kitchens and received tea, a sausage roll and two slices of bread, and again settled down in their places to consume their meal. Every corner of the square was utilised, and quite a number of men sat themselves down on the steps at the west door of St. Giles Cathedral, while a score or so others, including a number of women, sat down on the step around the Buccleuch Monument. After a while, some sought shade in the far corner near the Signet Library. Some, more active, busied themselves in helping with the further distribution of tea, whilst from parts of the encampment came snatches of songs. Large numbers of the public viewed the scene, although they were not encouraged by the police to loiter. In the bright sunshine the Marchers were a colourful gathering, with red flavours very much to the fore, while the owners lay down in ranks, and the appearance of a military bivouac was enhanced when the 'flying squad' of cyclists arrived and 'stacked' machines."—Edinburgh Press

After waiting here some time, it was decided that we go to the Meadows where the men could have a rest and hear a report of the deputation.

They march through Holyrood

The Marchers' road to the Edinburgh Meadows lay down that historic thoroughfare, the Royal Mile, leading to the historic Royal Palace of Holyrood.⁵

Down go the swinging columns, down right to the gates of Holyrood. "Turn to the right", says a police official. The March leaders turn a deaf ear. "Straight On!" "Straight on" it is, right through the Palace grounds itself. The pompous official in charge at the Palace almost took an apoplectic fit! His eyes literally bulged out with mingled astonishment and horror.

In go the columns, a mile of flaming, flaunting scarlet banners, headed by the Maryhill Band playing Connolly's Rebel Song as if their lungs would burst. What a sight!!

The proletariat, the indomitable proletariat in their ragged clothes, have stepped into the most sacred precincts in all Scotland!

The walls and grounds of the Royal Palace of Holyrood—that innermost sanctuary of all the Royal parasites in Scotland's history—echo the tramp of the first legions of the masses. The walls and ground of Holyrood that heard the music of Rizzio, and Mary Queen of Scots, hear the song of that murdered Irish leader, "The Rebel Song", and then the thunderous battle cry of the world's workers, "The Internationale".

Never has Holyrood heard or witnessed anything like this. No wonder the capitalists are shocked to the marrow! Is this a herald of the approaching storm which will shatter their domination for ever? Murdered Connolly lives again; his spirit, his song, his memory inspires these Hunger Marchers as they swing through the grounds and then pass through the other gate.

On to the Meadows, where the men rested, heard a report of the deputation and a statement on the tasks now to be undertaken by Comrades McShane, McGovern and Ferguson.

It is significant that although the Marchers were able to smash the Press boycott on all other activities relating to the March, not a single capitalist Daily mentioned the March through Holyrood. Only the Daily Worker reported this event. Both during the preparations for the March, then during the converging of the Marchers on Corstorphine, and finally over the historic three days and the return, the Daily Worker featured the March. We believe, however, the Holyrood Palace incident itself is sufficient commentary on the value of the workers' own Press.

Princes Street

That night another desperate attempt was made to disorganise and disperse the March. Accommodation was again refused; no hall, noth-

ing could be found; if the Marchers cared, the Meadows were available to them.

But it didn't demoralise these Marchers. After an indignant, gigantic Protest Meeting at the Mound, another deputation returned from meeting the Authorities. "Only the streets are left to us", they reported. A roar from the Marchers and the workers of Edinburgh—"All right, we'll sleep in the street; but by God, we'll pick the streets to sleep in!"

Form up! Off to—where? Direct to Princes Street directly below the flood-lit Edinburgh Castle, directly opposite the plutocratic Conservative and Liberal Clubs and the palatial hotels! The whistle goes, "Packs off! Make yourselves comfortable, boys; here's your bed for the night!"

Never in all its history has Edinburgh witnessed anything like what followed. Right along the South pavement in the most aristocratic street in Britain lay the Hunger Marchers—blankets and newspapers spread out for mattresses! The wealthy dress-suited plutocracy as they came from their clubs and banquets, goggled, absolutely goggled! Here are excerpts from the Edinburgh Press, which showed their amazement:

Press reports

"At a fairly late hour there was no sign of them dispersing, but it was a surprise to the large number of citizens remaining on Princes Street to see them spread out along the south pavement, set down their equipment, and prepare to stay there.

The spectacle was amazing. Behind the huddled marchers was the Castle, brilliantly floodlit, while on the north pavement strong forces of police patrolled and kept the crowds of bewildered theatre-goers and others on the move. Motorists stopped to survey the extraordinary scene before they were moved on, and practically all traffic—quite considerable for a time—had to use the north side of the street to avoid the equipment of the marchers.

This surprising manoeuvre suffered no interference from the police. The marchers were orderly, though several high-spirited sections were occasionally noisy.

Walking until dawn

"With banners stacked against the railings of the gardens and the last tunes played on the flute bands, some of the marchers equipped with proper sleeping bags turned in for the night, with shoes, etc., set on the kerb. Others paraded up and down amongst the sleeping forms, but after a couple of hours nearly everyone was either asleep or dozing.

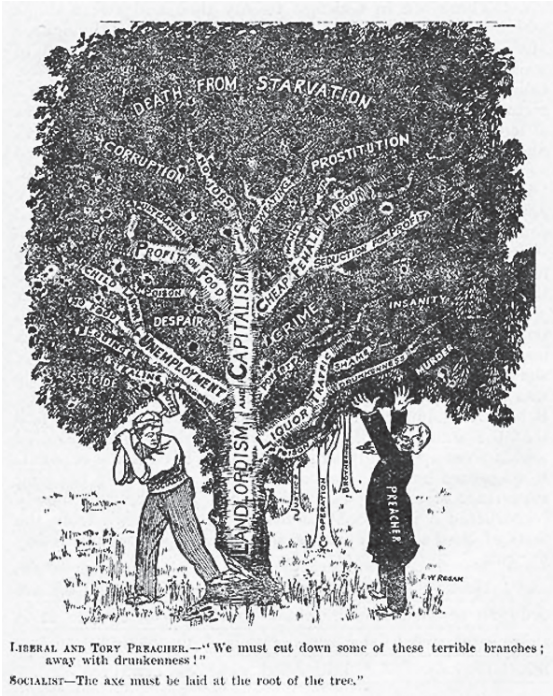
The first hour or so was passed in proper camp-fire manner with, occasionally, songs and choruses, whilst remarks such as 'Let's put out the lights and go to sleep', greeted the extinguishing of the Castle floodlighting system. It was indeed the 'Lights Out', however, and the camp became quiet, patrolled at the distance of the width of the street by the police"—Edinburgh Dispatch

"Historic Princes Street has known many unusual sights, but that presented this morning when the marchers' camp, extending for over two hundred yards, from midway between Hanover and Frederick Streets to midway between Castle Street, was unique.

It had to be seen to be believed. Men and women were rising from their hard couches while citizens were passing to their work by motor car, tram and on foot.

Men shaved with their mirrors supported on the railings of West Princes Street Gardens, which were kept closed, and others washed and dried themselves at a fountain in the middle of the marchers' encampment. Policemen in twos and threes marched up and down.

One man slept in a bathing suit, with a newspaper as a mattress and a single blanket as cover. Another rose this morning and wrote a song, 'For Liberty', which he



proudly showed to his leaders.

It is impossible for passers-by to walk along the area of footpath occupied by the marchers. Walking along on the carriageway one heard snatches of conversation:

'Slept well?'

'How did ye enjoy yer feather bed?'

'Did ye feel a draught coming in during the night?'

A woman drummer

They were a good-natured crowd, laughing and joking. An early morning urn of steaming tea was brought to them, and they proceeded to entertain themselves—and passers-by—until their breakfast arrived. They sang, flutes were played, while a women put on the big drum and started banging it while another clashed cymbals; there was an attempt at dancing, and a youth showed how a drum-major's staff should be swung. Right at the western end of the camp, Mr McGovern MP, one of the leaders, lay 'abed' cleaning his shoes, when an Evening Dispatch representative made a tour of the marchers this morning. By his side, Mr McShane, another of the leaders, lay stretched out."—Edinburgh Dispatch

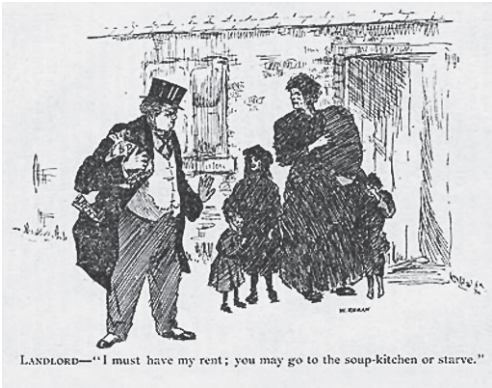
The marchers' strength

Were they demoralised? Did the Authorities' plan succeed of intimidating and frightening the Marchers by forcing them to sleep out on the pavements? No!

It was the Authorities who were demoralised and panicky. The Marchers—men and women—inspired by their cause, feeling and knowing they had the support of the working masses everywhere, were more determined, more united, more militant than ever. Their spirit of self-imposed discipline had been tested and emerged with flying colours.

So determined were the men that they beat the police objections to having their meals in Princes Street and had their breakfast and dinner there. Princes Street—which had been turned into a dormitory by the actions of the Authorities—was now turned into an open-air dining place by the Marchers themselves!

By this time the Press, that tried to ignore the March, was pestering us for interviews. The following from the Edinburgh Evening News of 13th June is an example, and explains to some extent the situation on the



morning after sleeping on the street:

"Mr John McGovern and Mr McShane were among the first to rise from their open-air 'bunks', and by eight o'clock most of the men were recovering some of their spiritedness which they have displayed, and were sitting against the railings, laughing and jesting, while supplies of food were rushed from the field-Kitchens at Simon Square and tea was being served steaming hot from large and well-filled dixie cans. A number were too much overcome by fatigue to bother about food.

'The greatest street! Look at it now!'

Mr Harry Mc Shane and Mr Aitken Ferguson, another member of the Council in charge of the marchers, in conversation with an Evening News representative in Princess Street this morning, said they regarded the action of the authorities in not giving them accommodation last night as a trumpery evasion, and they thought it was clear that the authorities were making efforts to drive them out of the city. They were determined that they would not be driven out in that way, and even if they had to 'grow into the ground' they would not continue to make their sleeping quarters in Princes Street. The previous night, the police had obtained them accommodation within ten minutes. Now the authorities were prepared to allow nearly 1,000 men and women to remain exposed to the elements of a night in the open without regard to health.

'Here is the greatest street in Europe,' added Mr Ferguson; 'just look at it now!'

Mr McShane said he had taken part in five Hunger Marches altogether, and in not one city had he had such an experience as to have been compelled to remain in the streets all night.

Mr Ferguson cynically recalled that a week or two ago Mr McGovern had been invited to attend the General Assembly in Edinburgh as the guest of Mr John Buchan. Mr McGovern had now visited Edinburgh, and was given the hospitality of Princess Street along with the marchers, instead of Holyrood Palace.

'Here We Are And Here We Stay'

'In view of this new situation', added Mr Mc Shane, 'Mr McGovern had been contemplating remaining in Edinburgh instead of attending the House of Commons for the unemployment debate tomorrow. The Marchers' Council had been considering the matter, and were of the opinion that Mr McGovern should go to London to bring attention to the plight of the marchers from a national platform.

'So far', said Mr McShane, 'here we are and here we stay until another decision is reached. We can breakfast, dinner or tea here, and the men require a rest. They can have that rest in Princes Street. We have decided to give them a long lie in "bed" this morning' —Edinburgh Evening News

The Town Clerk wants a guarantee

It was clear that the March had stirred Edinburgh to its very depths. Nothing like it had ever occurred to disturb the repose of Scotland's Capital. The job was now to mobilise Scotland to organise the sympathy and support which existed to carry on a fight in every county, town and village for the development of schemes of work and relief scales.

A deputation on behalf of the Marchers, consisting of the Rev. Mr Marwick and Capt. JR White⁶, interviewed the Authorities on the question of accommodation for the Marchers, but without success.

Then it was decided that the March should approach the PAC on this and other questions. A very heated discussion ensued between the Marchers' deputation and the PAC officer in Edinburgh, Mr Douglas, a most impudent and

self-satisfied individual, who informed the deputation that the PAC was open day and night for applications.

On the return of the deputation, they were informed that the Assistant Chief Constable and the Town Clerk Depute had proposals to make to the March leadership. These proposals were:

- (1) That the Authorities were prepared to pay the Balance (over £80) towards the cost of Transport of the Marchers returning to their homes;
- (2) That this would only be done provided that a guarantee was given that no more Marches to Edinburgh would take place.

They were told promptly and straightly that there would be no such guarantee given.

The PAC bluff called

Immediately they left, the marchers formed up and set off to the PAC Office. The March was calling the bluff of Mr Douglas and the PAC. Six hundred Marchers, supported by Edinburgh workers, lined up in order to make the individual application for accommodation which Mr Douglas had boasted of being ready to receive—and the result? Complete and total collapse of the Edinburgh PAC.

A tremendous outburst of anger from the Marchers at the refusal of the PAC to do anything preceded a huge mass demonstration of Edinburgh workers who came to join the Marchers. Back to Princes Street, and then at 11pm, a terrific demonstration through the City.

Edinburgh was out to a man—roused, militant. The courage and determination of the Marchers had lit a flame of struggle among the masses of the Edinburgh workers.

Never was there such a turnout and such enthusiasm. The Marchers and workers were one, fused in a common struggle against the capitalist governors.

It was a staggering blow to the authorities—a victory thenceforth was assured. Halls were speedily secured by the workers and the Marchers were housed that night.

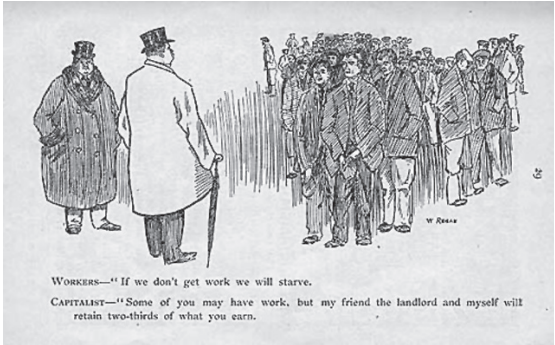
The final day

The next day was the question of driving home the advantages gained. The following report from the Edinburgh Evening News of 14th June explains fairly well the situation on the Wednesday morning.

"Mr McGovern MP and Mr McShane proceeded to the City Chambers in the forenoon for the purpose of making representations with regard to the position of the marchers in the city.

There was being held at the time a meeting of the Lord Provost's Committee of the Town Council, which had been specially called to consider the situation. The meeting was private, and at the close the Press representatives were informed that no statement would be made regarding the proceedings.

Mr McGovern and Mr McShane were not received by the Committee, but after the meeting, consultations took place between them and Mr Mackinnon, the Depute Chief Constable.



They left the building evidently dissatisfied with the result of their mission. Their demands were for food and accommodation for the men, or, alternatively, for free transport for the marchers to their homes.

Thanks to the citizens

Mr Aitken Ferguson, on behalf of the Marchers' Council, stated that he would like to convey his appreciation of the response which the citizens of Edinburgh had given to the appeal of the marchers, and he mentioned that plans were being considered for a much bigger march to Edinburgh in the near future.

Chalked on the causeway in Simon Square, in bold letters, was the message: 'Edinburgh Workers Solidarity Wins Scottish Hunger Marchers a Bed' —obviously an appreciation of the local efforts made for the comfort of the marchers last night"—Edinburgh Evening News

It should be mentioned, however, that when negotiations broke down, the deputation gave the Authorities an hour to provide a meal, failing which -in view of the fact that the Public Assistance Committee had refused to accept applications for relief—we would take other steps to secure a meal. 'This had the effect of having the Authorities telling us to spend the £30 we had earmarked for the buses. When we said —What about the buses, then? we were told confidentially that the buses would be all right. Later a meeting of Marchers was held at which a report was given. An effigy of Sir Godfery Collins was burnt. A further meal was provided, while a deputation went to the Ministry of Labour to raise the question of paying benefit to the Marchers for days they were on the march. No progress was made here. About 5.30 the buses arrived for the Marchers, without any guarantee being given and without any payment being made by the Marchers. The working class had broken through! A smashing victory had been obtained! At the last meeting of the Marchers in Edinburgh, when the final report was given, telegrams of support came from all quarters—Notts and Derby, Teeside, London, Glasgow. A telegram from Calton announcing reinforcements ready to leave drew a storm of cheers.

Where was the guarantee of no future Hunger March? Dropped like a hot brick in the face of the Marchers' refusal and the solidarity of the workers!

The marchers come home

And the welcome given to the returning Marchers! In Glasgow, for example, the streets were black with people waiting for the buses; meetings lasting until well after midnight were held in the presence of tremendous, cheering crowds. The very mention of Unity and the United Front invariably drew tumultuous cheers.

Edinburgh capitalists hope they have seen the last of the Hunger Marchers. Their hopes are in vain and doomed to disappointment.

Our lessons

The March has shown the tremendous militancy and feeling for Unity which exists all over Scotland. It has demonstrated deaffly before the eyes of all, that while the masses of the workers are steadily coming together, the leadership and the policy of the Labour Party and Trade Unions in the main supports Capitalism.

notes

1. Public Assistance Committee—PAC's were appointed by local authorities to administer the granting of relief for the unemployed.
2. 1931, unable to deal with the economic crisis Ramsey MacDonald, the then Labour Prime Minister, dissolved the Labour Government and formed a coalition government with the Tories and Liberals—the National Government.
3. Leader of the Labour Party.
4. TUC General Secretary.
5. Being a Glaswegian McShane can be forgiven for confusing Queens Park with The Meadows. Queens Park is the name of the park beside Holyrood Palace, while The Meadows are on Edinburgh's Southside.
6. Capt JR White was an Irish Protestant, republican and socialist. He organised the Irish Citizen Army defend strikers from attack in the 1913 Dublin lockout. This body later formed the nucleus of Connolly's Citizen Army. White fought with the Irish Republican Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, became increasingly dismayed by the manipulation of the International Brigades by the Communists and resigned his command and worked for the anarcho-syndicalist CNT.

